REV. JOHN G. HENRY,
CINCINNATI, OHIO.

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John G. Henry

# SERMONS

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# SERMON I.

## THE PARABLE OF THE ARK.

"And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life."—GENESIS vii. 15.

CHRIST always taught by parables. Hence the popularity and the power of his teaching. The masses never were, and, perhaps, never will be, able to receive instruction in any other way than by parabolic illustrations. He who would be a successful minister must open his mouth in parables; he who would win the hearts of the multitude must closely imitate his Master, and preach in parables which all men can understand. I believe there are few living men who are able to devise a parable. Those who do possess this rare ability are very scarce indeed; nor do I myself profess to belong to the honorable confraternity. I have sometimes endeavored if it were possible to fashion a parable; and though I found it easy at times to manufacture a figure, yet a parable I can by no means make. I am happy to say it is not required of me to do so, for the book of God's word, if it be rightly used, is suggestive of a thousand parables; and I have no reason to fear that I shall be short of subjects for preaching, when I am able to find such mighty parables as I do in God's word. I shall preach to you this evening a parable. It shall be the parable of the ark. While I do so you must understand that the ark was a real thing—that it was really made to float upon the waters, and carry in it Noah and his family and two of all flesh. This is a fact, not a myth. But I shall take this real fact and use it as a parable. Making the ark represent salvation, I shall preach to all who are within sound of my voice the parable of the ark. The ark which saved from the floods of water is a beautiful picture of Jesus Christ as the means of salvation, by whom

multitudes of all flesh are preserved, and saved from perishing in the floods of eternal perdition.

I. First, then, in working out this parable I shall remark, that there is BUT ONE MEANS OF SALVATION. The ark of gopher wood in the one case, and the person of Christ in the other case, sets forth the one only means that was ever planned or provided by God. The whole world was drowned except those happy ones who were found in the ark. The mightiest beast and the tiniest insect, the stately elephant and the loathsome reptile, the fleet horse and the creeping snail, the graceful antelope and the ugly toad—every living substance that was upon the face of the ground was involved in one common doom, save those only who were preserved alive in the ark. The noblest animals, endowed with the finest instincts, were all drowned, despite their powers of swimming (if they were not fish), save those only who were sheltered in the ark. The strongest winged fowls that ever cut the air were all wearied in their flight and fell into the water, save those only who were housed in the ark. The proudest tenants of the forest, those who ranged fearlessly in the broad light of day or those who prowled stealthily under the cover of night, the strongest, the mightiest, all were swallowed up in the vast abyss, save those only who were commanded by God to hide themselves within the shelter of the ark. Even so, in the application of my parable, there is only one way of salvation for all men living under heaven. There is only one name whereby they can be saved. Wouldst thou be saved, rich man? There is no way but that whereby the poverty-stricken pauper is also to be saved. Wouldst thou be delivered, thou man of intelligence? Thou shalt be saved in the same way as the most ignorant. There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but Jesus Christ and him crucified. There were not two arks, but one ark: so there are not two Saviours, but one Saviour. There was no other means of salvation except the ark: so there is no plan of deliverance except by Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners. In vain you climb the lofty top of Sinai: fifteen cubits upwards shall the waters prevail. In vain you

climb to the highest pinnacles of your self-conceit and your worldly merit: ye shall be drowned—drowned beyond the hope of salvation; for "other foundations can no man lay than that which is laid—Jesus Christ and him crucified." Would those of my congregation be saved? They must all be saved by one way. Do they object to Christ as the plan of salvation? Then they must be damned, for there is no other hope for them. Do they think this too hard? do they think the revealed plan of salvation too humbling? Then they must sink, even as the sons of Adam sank beneath the mighty flood, and all flesh was utterly consumed by the overwhelming billows. There is but one way. Enter into the ark: take refuge in Christ. Thus only can ye be saved. But, "how shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation?" By what means shall ye secure your souls, or your bodies either? What plans can ye devise for your security? Your refuges shall prove to be refuges of lies; the winds, the rain, the hail, and the tempest shall destroy them. There is one Saviour, but there is only one. There is one Jesus who saves his people from their sins, but there is no other name and no other means of salvation. The ark stood alone, and even so doth Christ Jesus.

II. Proceeding with my parable, I must direct your attention to THE SIZE OF THIS ARK; this may be comforting to you. If you read the 15th verse of the 6th chapter, you will find that the ark was of immense size. "The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits." It is an old objection of infidels that there was not room enough in it for all kinds of creatures that lived on the face of the earth; but we know, on Divine authority, that if there were not room enough in it for all the different kinds of creatures which were then alive, they would have been drowned; yet of every kind some were safely housed, so that room enough was found for them all. This is not very logical, perhaps, you will say, but it is conclusive enough for us, if we believe in revelation. Yet there really is no reason for any one to make the objection, and we have no room to entertain it, since the most eminent calcu

lators have proved to demonstration, that the vessel called the ark was of immense size, and was able not merely to hold all the creatures, but all the provender they would require for the year during which it floated on the water. I use this idea, without stopping to expound it further. Let me but trace its analogy as a beautiful picture of the plan of salvation —Oh! what a capacious plan! The ark was a great ark, which held all kinds of creatures; and our Christ is a great Refuge, who saves all kinds of sinners. The ark was an immense vessel—in it floated a multitude of animals who were saved; Christ's salvation is an immense salvation, and in it there shall be delivered a multitude which no man can number. The narrow-minded bigot limits salvation to his own contracted notions, and he still says, "There shall none be saved, except they walk arm-in-arm with me." Poor, little, miserable soul! he cuts his coat according to his own fashion, and declares, that if men do not all cut their coats in the same way they can not be saved. But not so the Bible. The Bible preaches a great salvation. It says there is a multitude that no man can number, who shall stand before the throne of God. Here is assembled a multitude of sinners; but if you all feel your need of a Saviour, there is room enough for you in heaven. Here is a multitude of hearers; but if every one of you this night should come to Christ with real penitence in your hearts, and belief in Him, you would not find that there was not room enough for you. That saying is still true, "And yet there is room." There is not room enough for a pharisee, for a man who does not feel himself a sinner, for a hypocrite, no, nor yet for a formalist; but there is room enough for every convinced sinner under God's heaven. There has been room enough hitherto, and we have never yet heard of saints complaining that they were cramped for room; but rather, I have heard them say in the words of David, "I called upon the Lord in distress; the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place." They have ever found abundance of room in Christ, and so shall you. Our Redeemer is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto him. He is able to save all of you. If the Father that hath sent him draw

you, and you come unto him, doubt not there is room. Do not think, beloved, because we preach election, that we preach the election of a few. I find that this is a common mistake. Some one will say to me, "I don't like your Calvinism, sir because it says that there are a few elected, and that nobody else will be saved."

Nay, sir, but it does not say that there are a few elected; it says no such thing; it says they are a multitude, that no man can number, that have been elected, and who knows but what you are one of them? It does not turn you out. It gives you ten thousand times more reason for hope than the Arminian preacher, who stands up and says, "There is room for everybody, but I do not think there is any special grace to make them come; if they won't come, they won't come, and there is an end of it; it is their own fault, and God will not make them come." The word of God says they cannot come, yet the Arminian says they can; the poor sinner feels that he cannot, yet the Arminian declares positively that he could if he liked; and though the poor sinner feels sometimes that he would if he could, and groans over his inability, this blind guide tells him that it is all nonsense; whereas, it is, in truth, God's own work to make a man feel that he is unable. You must feel it; and you may plead against yourself on account of it, but you shall *come* for all that. "He will not plead against you;" "no, but he will put strength in you." Ah! there is more hope for you in the pure Gospel of the blessed God, than there is in those fancies and fictions of men which are now-a-days preached everywhere, except in a few places where God hath reserved unto himself a people who have not bowed their knee to the Baal of the age. Nay, beloved, we do not preach that a few shall be saved; we preach that a mighty host, whom mortals cannot count, shall be the seed of Jesus. So shall he see of the travail of his soul, and be abundantly satisfied. Hear me, then, while out of this parable of the ark I draw encouragement concerning the capacity of the salvation of Christ.

III. In the third place, note that THE ARK WAS A SAFE REFUGE. Noah was commanded to make an ark of the best

wood, gopher wood; and, lest there should be any leakage in it, he was commanded to "pitch it within and without with pitch," and we do not find that it ever sprung a leak while it was out at sea; she certainly never went into harbor to mend her bottom, for she had no harbor to go to. We never read that Noah called up Shem, Ham, and Japheth to work at the pumps, nor yet that they had any, for there was not a bit of leakage about her. No doubt there were storms during that year; but we do not hear that the ship was ever in danger of being wrecked. The rocks, it is true, were too low down to touch her bottom; for fifteen cubits upwards did the waters prevail, and the mountains were covered. Rising twenty-seven feet above the loftiest mountains, she had no quicksands to fear; they were too deep below her keel. But of course she was exposed to the winds; sometimes the hurricane might have rattled against her, and driven her along. Doubtless, at another time, the hail beat on her top, and the lightnings scarred the brow of night; but the ark sailed on, not one was cast out from her, nor were her sailors wearied with constant pumping to keep out the water, or frequent repairs to keep her secure. Though the world was inundated and ruined, that one ark sailed triumphantly above the waters. The ark was safe, and all who were in her were safe too.

Now, sinner, the Christ I preach to you is such a refuge as that. His Gospel has no flaw in it. As the ark never sank and the elements never prevailed against it, so Christ never failed, he can not fail; all the principalities and powers are subject unto him. Those who are in Christ are sheltered safely from every storm, they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hands. Remember that God gave the pattern, and Noah perfected the work of the ark, ere a single fountain of the great deep was broken up, or one drop of the desolating storm fell from the vengeful clouds. And it is not less true that our glorious Lord was set up in the counsels of eternity a perfect Christ before the clouds of vindictive wrath began to brew on account of man's iniquity; and his mighty work of mediation was finished before thy poor soul was invited to take shelter in him. Oh, methinks as the

angels looked out of the windows of heaven upon the swelling tide, and saw how securely the ark rode upon its surface, they never doubted that all who were inside were as safe as the ark itself. And is there any reason to doubt that those who are in Christ are as safe as Christ? Did he not say himself, "because I live, ye shall live also?" Were the sons of Noah commanded to take their tools into the ark to keep it in repair? And dost thou vainly think that thou canst make the matter of eternal salvation more perfect than it was when Jesus said "It is finished?" Oh, no; the work is done, the vessel is sea-worthy. "God can not mend it, the devil can not mar it." It is not an Arminian Gospel I preach to you, that tells of dangers, and sounds alarms in the ears of those who are within the ark of Christ. In him—in him—oh, hear it, poor trembling sinner! in him you are—

"Beyond the reach of death's alarms,
The source of mortal woe."

"They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which shall never be removed, which abideth forever." They that trust in the Lord are blessed. "They are like trees planted by rivers of water; their leaf shall not wither, and whatsoever they do shall prosper." If you once come unto Jesus, and trust in him, there is no fear of sinking. How sweet was the precious hymn we sang just now—

"Firm as a rock Thy Gospel stands,
My Lord, my hope, my trust;
If I am found in Jesus' hands
My soul can ne'er be lost."

Not but that there will be storms, and tempests will beat around you—these you will be sure to have; but you will be too high up ever to strike on the rocks. If you are once on board the good ship of salvation, you will be lifted up too high above the floods to be swallowed in the quicksands. With cheerful heart I can commend you to God, and the word of his testimony. Christ will preserve you.

"Grace will preserve what grace begins,
To save from sorrows and from sins;
The work that wisdom undertakes
Eternal mercy ne'er forsakes."

Believers! could you give up the doctrine of your security in Christ to any body? No, that I know you could not. Touch one of my brethren or sisters in the Lord who attends this chapel on that point, and you will soon get your answer. I have sometimes heard disputes outside the chapel door, when some who do not believe the truth have been disputing it, and I have felt confident that I might leave its defence in your hands. There be mighty men of valor among you, who are not ashamed to uphold the whole counsel of God, even as I am constantly anxious to declare it. Beloved, the ark is pitched within and without with pitch; it is made of good gopher wood; it can never sink so long as we are on board; if it were threescore years and ten, she will still preserve us. Salvation in Christ is a sure salvation.

IV. Now I go to another part of the parable. The creatures in the ark of course wanted light; but it is a singular thing that THERE WAS ONLY ONE WINDOW IN THE ARK. In the 16th verse of the 6th chapter we read—"A window shalt thou make to the ark." I have often wondered how all the creatures could see through one window; but I have not wondered what was meant by it, for I think it easy to point the moral. There is only one window whereby Christians ever get their light. All who come to Christ and receive salvation by him are illuminated in one way. That one window of the ark may fitly represent to us *the ministry of the Holy Ghost.* There is only one light which lighteneth every man who cometh into the world, if he be lightened at all. Christ is the light, and it is the Holy Spirit of truth by whom Christ is revealed. Thus we discern sin, righteousness, and judgment. No other conviction is of any real value. As we are brought under the teachings of the Spirit, we do perceive our guilt and misery, and our redemption and refuge in Christ. No other means exist. There is only one window to the ark. "Why," says one, "there are some of us who see light through

one minister and some through another." True, my friend; but still there is only one window. We ministers are only like panes of glass, and you can obtain no light through us but by the operations of the same Spirit that worketh in us. And even then the different panes of glass give different shades of light. There you have your fine polished preacher; he is a bit of stained glass, not very transparent, made to keep the light out rather than to let it in. There is another pane; he is a square cut diamond; he seems an old-fashioned preacher, but still he is a bit of good glass, and lets the light through. Another one is cut after a more refined stile; but still he is plain and simple, and the light shines through him. But there is only one light, and only one window. He who revealeth to us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is the Holy Spirit. We have only one instructor, if we preach the truth. One brother may be preaching this night in the Church of England, another may be holding forth the word of God amongst the Independents, and others amongst the Baptists; but they have only one Spirit, if they are taught of God. There is only one window to the ark; and though there were first, second, and third stories to the ark, all saw out of one window; so that the little saint that is in the first story gets light through that window; and the saint that has been brought up to the second story gets light through the same window; and he who has been promoted to the loftiest story has to get light through the same window too. There is no other means of our seeing except through the one window made to the ark, the window of the Holy Spirit. Have we looked through that? Have we seen the clear blue sky above us? Or have we known that when our eye of faith was dim, and we could see nothing at all, still our Master was at the helm, and would preserve us through all our darkness and difficulties? It is an instructive fact that the ark had only one window in it.

V. Now, if you will read the chapter attentively, you will find it said "ROOMS shalt thou make in the ark." When I read that I thought it would serve for a point in the parable, seeing it may teach my dear friends that they are not all to

be put together;—in the ark, rooms were made. Those who lived in one room did not stand or sit with those who lived in another; but they were all in the same ark. So I have sometimes thought, There are our Wesleyan friends, some of them love the Lord; I have no doubt they are in the ark, though they do not occupy the same apartment as we do. There are our Baptist friends, who love the Lord; we welcome them in our room. Then there are our Independent friends, those also love the Lord; they are in another room. And our Presbyterian and Episcopalian brethren,—in all these various sections are some who are called of God and brought into the ark, though they are in different rooms. But, beloved, they are all in one ark. There are not two Gospels. As long as I can find a man that holds the same Gospel, it does not matter what order of church government he adopts if he be in Christ Jesus—it is of little consequence what room he is in so long as he is in the ark. If he belongs to those of whom it is written, "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," I will call him brother. We can not all expect to be in one room. The elephants did not live with the tigers, and the lions did not lie down with the sheep. There were different rooms for different classes of creatures; and it is a good thing there are different denominations, for I am sure some of us would not get on very comfortably with certain denominations. We should want more liberty than we could get in the Church of England; we should want more freedom than we could get with the Presbyterians; we should want more soundness of doctrine than we could get with the Wesleyans; and we should want a little more brotherly love, perhaps, than we could get with some of the strict Baptists. We should not entirely agree with them all; and happy is he who can sometimes put his head into one room and sometimes into another, and can say to all that love the Lord Jesus Christ, "Grace be with you all so long as you are in the ark." Do not let me condemn those that are taking refuge in the same vessel with myself. So long as you love Jesus, so long as you are attached to his person, so long as you are called by his grace, so long as you are partakers of his

mercy, take heart. There were rooms in the ark, and there are rooms in the church. But one day you will be all associated together in one general assembly,

"When He presents your souls,
Unblemished and complete,
Before the glory of His face,
With joys divinely great."

VI. But though there were many rooms in the ark, I want you to notice one thing more, THERE WAS ONLY ONE DOOR. It is said, "And the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof." And so, there is only one door into the ark of our salvation, and that is Christ. There are not two Christs preached, one in one chapel, and another in another. "If any man preach any other doctrine than that ye have received, let him be accursed." There is but one Gospel. We take in the righteous out of all sections, but we do not take in all sections. We pick out the godly from amongst them all, for we believe there is a remnant according to the election of grace in the vilest of them. But, still, there is only one door, and "he that cometh not in by the door, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." There was only one door to the ark.

Some animals, like the camelopard, whose heads are higher than other animals, might have to bow their necks to go in by the same entrance as the waddling ducks, who naturally stoop, even as they enter a barn; and so, some of the lofty ones of this world must bend down their stiff necks, and bow their proud heads, if they would enter into the church by Christ. Thus, again, the swift horse and the slow-paced snail must enter by one door; so, too, the scribes and pharisees must come in the same way as the publicans and harlots, or be for ever excluded.

All the beasts God had chosen went in by the one door and if any had stood without, and said, "We shall not come in that way," they would have been standing without till the flood overtook and destroyed them; for there was only one door. There is only one way of salvation, and there is only

one means of getting into it. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," but "he that believeth not," whoever he be, must "be damned." There is no hope of any other way of salvation. He that cometh in by the door shall be saved; and Jesus saith, "I am the door."

VII. Proceeding in the parable, you will notice, that THIS ARK HAD SUNDRY STORIES IN IT. They were not all of one height. There were lower, second, and third stories. Now, this is a figure to me of the different kinds of Christians who are carried to heaven. There is my poor mourning brother, who lives in the bottom story; he is always singing, "Lord, what a wretched land is this!" He lives just near the keel, on the bare ribs of the ark. He is never very happy. A little light reaches him from the window at times; but, generally, he is so far from the light that he walks in darkness, and sees very little indeed. His state is that of constant groaning; he loves to go and hear "*the corruption preachers;*" he revels with delight in the deep experience of the tried family of God; he likes to hear it said, "Through much tribulation you will enter the kingdom of heaven;" if you paint the Christian life as a very gloomy one, he will like your picture, for his is gloomy indeed; he is always poring over texts such as these, "Oh, wretched man that I am," or that other, "They that pass through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools." He is down in the lower story of the ark. But never mind; he is in the ark, so we will not scold him, though he has little faith, and very much doubt. "With lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it." There is one of our brethren up a little higher, and he is saying, "I cannot exactly say I am safe; yet I have a hope that my head will be kept above the billows, though it goes hard with me at times. Now and then, too, the Lord bestows "some drops of heaven" upon me. Sometimes I am like the mountains of Hermon, where "the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." He is in the second story. Well, but he is no safer than the other one. He that is in the second story is no safer, though he is happier than the man on the ground floor. All are safe, so long as

they are in the ark. For my part, I like the uppermost story best. I had rather live up there, where I can sing, "O God, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise, even with my glory."

I love the place where the saints are always admonishing and encouraging one another with psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs,—

"Children of the Heavenly King,
As ye journey, sweetly sing;
Sing your Saviour's worthy praise,
Glorious in His works and ways."

I confess that I am obliged to go down to the lower story sometimes; but I like running up the ladder to the third deck, whenever I can, and there I can say—

"Oh! how sweet to view the flowing
Of His soul-redeeming blood;
With divine assurance knowing
That He made my peace with God."

But I am no more safe when I am in the top story than I am when I am in the bottom. The same wave that would split the ship and drown me, were I in the lowest story, would drown me if I were in the highest. However high some of us, and however low others of us may be, the same vessel bears us all, for we are one crew in one boat, and there is no dividing us. Come, then, my poor desponding hearer, is that your place, somewhere down at the bottom of the hold, along with the ballast? Are you always in trials and troubles? Ah! well, fear not, so long as you are in the ark. Do not be afraid, Christ is your strength and righteousness. The ark was in each and every department a secure shelter to all who were shut in. "Ah!" says one, "but I am down there, sir, at the bottom always, and I am afraid the vessel will sink." Do not be so silly; why should your heart beget such senseless fears? I knew a man who went up the Monument, and when he had got half way, he declared it vibrated and was about to fall, and he would come down. But the Monument has not fallen; it is as safe as ever; and if fifty like him, or fifty thousand,

went up, the Monument would be just as firm. But some poor nervous Christians are afraid Christ will let them sink. A wave comes against the side of the ship, but it does not hurt the ship, it only drives the wedges in tighter. The Master is at the helm—will not that assure your heart? It has floated over so many billows—will not that increase your confidence? It must, indeed, be a strong billow that will sink it now; there never shall be such an one. And where, think you, is the power that could destroy the souls who are sheltered in the ark of our salvation? Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect, since Christ hath died, and God the Father hath justified us? Happy assurance! We are all safe, so sure as we are in the covenant. The ark floated triumphantly on amidst all the dangers without, and when it finally rested on Mount Ararat, and God spake to Noah again, saying, "Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. Bring forth with thee every living thing;" then the inventory was complete, all were safely landed. So, too, will Christ present the perfect number of all his people to the Father in the last day; not one shall perish. The ark of our salvation shall bring all its living freight into the haven of everlasting rest.

"Truth is her compass, love her sail,
And heavenly grace her store;
The Spirit's influence the gale
That wafts her to the shore.

"Nor winds nor waves her progress check,
Her course she must pursue;
And though you often fear a wreck,
She's saved with all her crew."

VIII. This brings me to notice, in the last place, THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF ANIMALS THAT ENTERED INTO THE ARK.—"Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female." Listen to the statement. This great ark was meant to save both clean and unclean beasts. In like manner, the great salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ is intended for sinners of all

kinds, the clean and the unclean. There are some people in the world that we may well reckon in the former class. They are in every way respectable; their conduct in society is beyond reproach; exact in their commerce, they were never known to erase a figure in their account books; they would not defraud their neighbors, nor would they be so negligen of their fair fame as to do a disorderly action; their character is so amiable, that their mothers might regard them from childhood as almost without a fault; they have grown up to mature years without the hideous taint of immorality; their practice has been ever akin to piety; their zeal for the law of God has been truly commendable, so that Christ himself might have looked on them and loved them, although he tenderly and pitifully admonishes them, "One thing thou lackest." Ay, but the desolations of the flood are so universal, that there is no escape except in the ark. The clean beasts must go into the ark to be saved. There is not a soul among you so good, nor a character so clean, but ye have need of Christ, whether ye know your need or not. Ye may be never so good and excellent, but ye will want a Saviour. There is something about your character not clean. Your lives require purification, which ye can never find but in Christ.

"The best performance of your hands,
Dares not appear before his throne."

But, then, the unclean beasts went in likewise. Here is the opposite class. Are there not some of you (we know there are such) whose education from early childhood has been vicious—certainly not virtuous? From your earliest recollections you have gone into the paths of open profanity; you have dived into the kennel, and have steeped yourselves up to the very lips in the gall of bitterness. You have been drunkards, swearers, Sabbath-breakers, and injurious. You have indulged in all kinds of iniquities. You are just the sort of persons we should liken to unclean beasts. Ay! the ark was built for you—on purpose for you too. The most moral man will stand no better when he comes before God than you

will. He must be saved just the same as you are. You must both be saved by the one common salvation, or not at all. There is but one Saviour for all who are saved—there is but one redemption for every one of you who really is redeemed. There is but one ark for the clean and the unclean. "Ah!" say some, "I suppose, then, you take the unclean beasts to come from the courts, the alleys, and the filthy slums of the metropolis." Oh! no, not particularly so. We can find the unclean as plentifully in St. James's as in St. Giles's. There be some of what you call the "higher circles," who from infancy have revelled in vice. Soon did ye learn to break the rule of your parents' authority. You laughed at your mother's tears, you sneered at your father's counsels; you drank up iniquity in your school-days as the greedy ox drinketh up water. You made a boast of your wild riots. You tell of your wickedness now with an air of impertinent triumph. You brag of having sowed your wild oats. So infamous has been your career, in spite of good example and education, that, I suppose, "Newgate" could hardly produce a class of unclean beasts more to be loathed than you are. Well, now, to each class of sinners I preach. If thou feelest and deplorest thine uncleanness, there is mercy for thee, unclean as thou art. I beseech thee, come into the ark, and thou wilt never be turned out. If God constrain thee to come, as he did those creatures, he will never, never drive thee away. The ark was for the unclean as well as for the clean—for the swine as well as for the sheep—for the poisonous asp as well as for the harmless dove—for the carnivorous raven as well as for the turtle. All creatures came in, some of every sort. Ah! thou swinish sinner, one of Satan's swine, come in; thou shalt be safe. And ah! thou lamb-like sinner, gentle and mild, come in thou, for there is no other ark for thee, and thou wilt be drowned unless thou comest in by the same door into the great ark of salvation.

Let us divide these creatures once more. There were *creeping things*, and there were *flying things*. On the morning when the ark door was opened, you might have seen in the sky a pair of eagles, a pair of sparrows, a pair of vultures,

a pair of ravens, a pair of humming-birds, a pair of all kinds of birds that ever cut the azure, that ever floated on wing, or whispered their song to the evening gales. In they came. But if you had watched down on the earth, you would have seen come creeping along a pair of snails, a pair of snakes, and a pair of worms. There ran along a pair of mice there came a pair of lizards, and in there flew a pair of locusts There were pairs of creeping creatures, as well as pairs of flying creatures. Do you see what I mean by that? There are some of you that can fly so high in knowledge, that I should never be able to scan your great and extensive wisdom; and others of you so ignorant, that you can hardly read your Bibles. Never mind; the eagle must come down to the door, and you must go up to it. There is only one entrance for you all; and as God saved the birds that flew, so he saved the reptiles that crawled. Are you a poor, ignorant, crawling creature, that never was noticed—without intellect, without repute, without fame, without honor? Come along, crawling one! God will not exclude you. I have often wondered how the poor snail crawled in; but I dare say he started many a year before. And some of you have started for years, and still you keep crawling on. Ah! then, come along with thee, poor snail! If I could just pick thee up, and help thee on a yard or two, I would be glad to do it. It is strange how long you have been nigh to the ark, but not yet entered in; how long you have been near the portals of the church, but never joined it.

Remark again: they all got in. Oh! do not fear, if you are in your own esteem a crawling reptile: you may have the lowest possible opinion of yourself; still come; nobody forbids you to come, however mean you are; yea! and the meaner you are the more willing do I feel to invite you,—Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. What a strange assemblage was there on that morning! But Noah was positively commanded to bring all sorts of creatures into the ark. He might have thought some too vile and worthless to preserve alive, yet his orders were to bring them in. When Peter was commanded to preach the

Gospel to the Gentiles, God showed him in a vision "all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth and wild beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air." "Not so, Lord," said Peter; and, lo! "the voice spake to him again a second time, saying, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." In Christ there be some out of every nation, every kindred, and every tongue, who shall be saved to the praise of God and the Lamb forever and ever. There may be some one here who objects against himself, like Agur, "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man." Thy vileness shall not disqualify thee from entering in. It does not prevent my urging you to come. Have you not heard the words of my Master's commission, "*Of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark to keep them alive with thee?*" Oh! I want to bring you in. The Lord will not reject thee if thou comest with a penitent believing heart; he will not reproach *me* for having brought thee; he saith to his ministers, "of every sort bring them in."

Moreover, it was a mysterious impulse by which God moved the creatures to come. The sight must have been imposing; the elephants, the camels, the dromedaries, the rhinoceroses, and all the huge creatures walking in side by side (as it were) with the timorous hares, the tiny mice, the lizards, ferrets, squirrels, beetles, grasshoppers, and all such insignificant-looking little creatures. So it hath been in the church, so it shall be to the end of the chapter of her history: "As many as were ordained unto eternal life believed," though their characters by nature be various as this globe ever witnessed, rude as barbarism's foulest sink, or polished as Grecian culture ever knew.

Now, dear hearer, I do not care about asking you who you are, or what you are. That has nothing to do with me. What I ask you is, Are you in the ark, or are you not? You are saying, perhaps, "Sir, I do not care for you; why should you inquire about my condition?" But there will be a day when you will be like those who spake to Noah, and said, "Go along, greybeard; build your ark on the dry land, like a fool as you are; build your ark there on the hill-side, where the

waters cannot come. As for us, we shall eat and drink, and if to-morrow we die, what heed, for we have eaten and drunk the merrier while we have had the opportunity."

In vain did Noah warn them that the waters would surely come; he seemed unto them as one that mocked, and they laughed at him. Even so, when I preached of the resurrection to you this morning, some of you may have mocked, and thought that I was but pursuing a wild reverie of imagination. Ah! but how different was their tune, when the rains fell, when "the fountains of the great deep were broken up!" They doubtless changed their notes, when the clouds began to empty themselves in fury, when the very earth did crack, and its bowels were dissolved, and the mighty fluid gushed up to devour them all. Did they think Noah was a fool, when the last man stood on the last mountain-top, and cried in vain for help? I saw some time ago, a master-picture, which I think time will never erase from my memory. It was a picture of a man who had been climbing up to the top of the last mountain, and the floods were coming around him. He had his old father on his back; his wife was clasping him round his waist, and he had one arm round her; she held one child at her breast, and with her other hand she grasped another. In the picture was represented one child just letting go, the wife dropping, and the father clinging to a tree on the top of the hill; the branches were breaking, and it was being torn up by the roots. Such a scene of agony I never saw depicted before; yet such a scene was likely enough to have been real when the waters entirely covered the earth. They had climbed up to the top of the last hill; and now they sank. False hopes gave place to fell despair. And so it will be with you, ye careless ones, unless ye take shelter in the ark.

You ask me, how can we do it? Ye look anxious, some of you. Hearken, then, while I finish, as I have often done before, with the simple statement which contains our authority to preach, and your admonition to believe. Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

What is it to believe, say you? It is with thy whole heart to rely simply on the Lord Jesus Christ; he is the only mediator—to look to his sufferings and his death for the forgiveness of thy sins. And what is it to be baptized? It is to be immersed in water on the profession of thy faith, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." I cannot leave out one clause, nor yet the other. I dare not transpose or change their order, as some people do. I deliver unto you that which I have received, taking the text just as it stands. Let me ask once more, have you believed? have you been baptized? If not, you cannot say that those great promises written in the covenant are yours. On two grounds you have reason to doubt your salvation. "He that believeth not shall be damned." Where can I obtain faith, saith one? It is given by the Holy Spirit. "Every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

# SERMON II.

## PROVING GOD.

"Prove me now."—Malachi, iii. 10.

According to the laws of our country, no man can be condemned until his guilt is proved. It were well if we all carried out the same justice toward God which we expect from our fellow-men; but how frequently will men condemn the acts of their God as being hard and unkind! They do not say so—they dare not; they scarcely avow that they think so; but there is a kind of lurking imagination hardly amounting to a deliberate thought, which leads them to fear that God has forgotten to be gracious, and will be mindful of them no more. Let us never, my friends, think hardly of our God, till we can prove anything against him. He says to all his unbelieving children who are doubtful of his goodness and his grace, "Prove me now. Hast thou aught against me? Canst thou prove aught that will be dishonorable to me? Wherein have I ever broken my promise? In what have I ever failed to fulfil my word? Ah, thou canst not say that. Prove me now, if thou hast aught against me—if thou canst say anything against my honor—if thou hast hitherto not received answers to prayer and blessings according to promise. Set me not down as false, I beseech thee, until thou hast so proved me." "Prove me now," says the Lord to all his saints.

Moreover, not only is it unjust to think ill of any one, until we can prove something against him, but it is extremely unwise to be always suspicious of our fellow-creatures. Though there is much folly in being over credulous, I question if there is not far more in being over-suspicious. He who believes every man, will soon be bitten; but he who suspects

every man, will not only be bitten, but devoured. He who lives in perpetual distrust of his fellow-creatures cannot be happy; he has defrauded himself of peace and happiness, and assumed a position in which he cannot enjoy the sweets of friendship or affection. I would rather be too credulous towards my fellow-creatures than too suspicious. I had rather they should impose upon me by making me believe them better than they are, than that I should impose upon them by thinking them worse than they are. It is better to be cheated sometimes ourselves than that we should cheat others; and it is cheating others to suspect those on whose characters there resteth no suspicion. We acknowledge such morality among men, but we act not so towards God; we believe any liar sooner than we believe him. When we are in trial and trouble we will believe the devil, when he says God will forsake us. The devil, who has been a liar from the beginning, we will credit; but if our God promises anything, we say, "Surely this is too good to be true," and we doubt the fulfilment, because it is not brought to pass exactly at the time and in the way we anticipate. Let us never harbor such suspicions of our God. If we say in our haste, "All men are liars," let us preserve this one truth, "God cannot lie." His counsel is immutable, and he hath confirmed it by an oath, that "we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us" in Christ Jesus; let not our faith then dally with a fear; let us rather seek grace, that we may confidently believe and assuredly rely on the words which the lips of God do speak. "Prove me now, if any of you are suspicious of my word." If you think my grace is not sweet, "taste and see that the Lord is gracious." If you think that I am not a rock, and that my work is not perfect, come now, tread upon the rock, and see if it be not firm; build on the rock, and see if it be not solid. If thou thinkest mine arm shortened that I cannot save, come, ask, and I will stretch it out to defend thee. If thou thinkest that mine ear is heavy that I cannot hear, come, try it; call upon me, and I will answer thee. If thou art suspicious, make proof of my promises, so shall thy suspicions be removed. But, oh,

doubt me not, until thou hast found me unworthy of trust. "Prove me now."

In these words I find a *fact* couched, a *challenge* given, a *time* mentioned, and an *argument* suggested. Such are the four points I propose this morning to consider.

I. First, then, we have the FACT, that God allows himself to be proved—"Prove me now." In meditating on this subject it has occurred to me that all the works of creation are proofs of God; they evidence his eternal power and godhead. But inasmuch as he is not only the creator, but the sustainer of them all, they make continual proof of him, his goodness, his faithfulness, and his care. Methinks, when God launched the sun from his hand and sent him on his course, he said, "Prove me now;" see, Oh sun, if I do not uphold thee till thou hast done thy work, and finished thy career; rejoice thou mayest, "as a strong man to run a race," but while thou fulfillest thy circuits, and nothing is hid from thy heat, thou shalt prove my glory and shed light upon my handiwork. When the Almighty whirled the earth in space, methinks he said, "Prove me now," O earth, see if I do not perpetuate thy seasons, and give thee "seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night," refreshing thee with incessant providence. And to each creature he made, I can almost think the Almighty said, "Prove me now." Tiny gnat, thou art about to dance in the sunshine; thou shalt prove my goodness. Huge leviathan, thou shalt stir up the deep, and make it frothy; go forth, and prove my power. Ye creatures, whom I have endowed with various instincts, wait on me; I will give you your meat in due season. And you, ye mighty thunders and ye swift lightnings, go, teach the world reverence, and show forth my omnipotence. Thus, I think, all God's creatures are not merely proofs of his existence, but proofs of his manifold wisdom, his loving kindness, and his grace. The meanest and the mightiest of his created works, each and all, in some degree, prove his love, and teach us how marvelous is his nature; but he has given to man this high prerogative above all the works of his hands, that he alone should make designed and intelligent proof. They do but prove him unin-

tentionally. The things of earth prove God, yet they have no intention of so doing. The beasts praise God; the cattle on a thousand hills low forth his honor, and the very lions roar his praise; yet they do it not with intent, and judgment, and will; and although the sun proveth the majesty and the might of his Master, yet the sun hath neither mind nor thought, and it is not his intention to glorify God. But the saint doth it intentionally.

It is a great fact, beloved, that God will have all his children proofs of the various attributes of his nature. I do not think any one of the children of God proves all of God, but that they are all proving different parts of his one grand character, so that when the whole history of providence shall be written, and the lives of all the saints shall be recorded, the title of the book will be, "Proofs of God." There will be one compendious proof, that he is God, and changeth not; that with him there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." You will remember how one saint peculiarly proved the *long-suffering* of God, in that he was permitted to pursue his career to the utmost verge of destruction; while he hung on the cross, the patience that had borne with him so long, brought salvation to him at last. He was "in the article of death," falling into the pit, when sovereign grace broke the fall, everlasting arms caught the soul, and Jesus himself conducted him to paradise. Then again, you will remember another saint who plunged into a thousand sins, and indulged in the foulest lust, but she was brought to Christ; out of her did he cast seven evil spirits, and Mary Magdalene was made to prove the richness of our Saviour's pardoning grace, as well as the sweetness of a pardoned sinner's gratitude. It is a fact that the Lord is ready to forgive, and this woman is a great proof of it. There was Job, who was tortured with ulcers and made to scrape himself with a potsherd; he proved the Lord, that "he is very pitiful and of tender mercy;" from him we get evidence that God is able to sustain us amidst unparalleled sufferings. Let me note how Solomon proved the bounty of God. When he asked wisdom and knowledge, the Lord not only granted his request, but added riches and wealth and

honor to his store; and how did Solomon magnify this proof of divine bounty as he translates the experience of his dream into the counsel of his proverbs? While he advises us to get wisdom, he assures us that, "length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor." And then once more, how great a proof of God's special providence in maintaining in this world "a remnant according to the election of grace," do we derive from the history of Elijah. There sat the venerable seer, beneath a juniper tree, in the lone desert,—a great but grievous man,—an honored but a dejected prophet of the Most High. Do you mark him as he comes to Horeb, takes up his lodging in a cave, and complains in the awful solitude of his soul, "I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away?" Oh, had his fears been realized, what a blank would earth have been without a saint! But Elijah proved from the mouth of God the impossibility. He learnt for our sakes, as well as his own, what a reservation God has made in seasons of direst persecution. It is proved that there shall ever be still a church in the world while earth's old pillars stand.

Nor need we suppose that the testimony of the witnesses is closed. Each of God's saints is sent into the world to prove some part of the divine character. Perhaps I may be one of those who shall live in the valley of ease, having much rest, and hearing sweet birds of promise singing in my ears. The air is calm and balmy, the sheep are feeding round about me, and all is still and quiet. Well, then, I shall prove the love of God in sweet communings. Or, perhaps, I may be called to stand where the thunder clouds brew, where the lightnings play, and tempestuous winds are howling on the mountain top. Well, then, I am born to prove the power and majesty of our God; amid dangers he will inspire me with courage; amid toils he will make me strong. Perhaps it shall be mine to preserve an unblemished character, and so prove the power of sanctifying grace in not being allowed to backslide from my professed dedication to God. I shall then be a proof of the omnipotent power of grace, which alone can save from the power as well as the guilt of sin. The divers cases of all the

Lord's family are intended to illustrate different parts of his ways; and in heaven I do think one part of our blest employ will be to read the great book of the experience of all the saints, and gather from that book the whole of the divine character as having been proved and illustrated. Each Christian man is a manifestation and display of some position or other of God; a different part may belong to each of us, but when the whole shall be combined, when all the rays of evidence shall be brought, as it were, into one great sun, and shine forth with meridian splendor, we shall see in Christian experience a beautiful revelation of our God.

Let us remember, then, as an important fact, that God intends us to live in this world to prove him, and let us seek to do so, always endeavoring as much as we can to be finding out and proving the attributes of God. Remember, we have all the promises to prove in our lifetime; and it shall be found in the last great day that every one of them has been fulfilled. As the promises are read through now, it may be asked, "Who is a proof of such a promise?" Peradventure the question relates to some promise of almost universal application, and millions of saints will rise and say, "I prove the truth of that." Or there may be a promise in the Bible that it will seldom fall to the lot of one of God's children to prove: it is so peculiar, and few shall have been able thoroughly to understand it. But mark, there will be some witnesses to attest it, and all the promises shall be fulfilled in the united experience of the church. Such, then, the fact—God allows his children to prove him.

II. And now, secondly, we have here a CHALLENGE given to us—"Prove me now." "You who have doubted me, prove me. You who mistrust me, prove me. You who tremble at the enemy, prove me. You who are afraid you cannot accomplish your work, believe my promise, and come and prove me."

Now, I must explain this challenge to you, as to the way in which it has to be carried out. There are different sorts of promises given in God's word, which have to be proved in different ways. In the Bible there are three kinds of promise.

In the first class I will place the conditional promises, such as are intended for certain characters, given alone to them, and them only on certain conditions. There is a second class, referring exclusively to the future, the fulfillment of which does not relate to us at the present time. While there is a third and most glorious class, called absolute promises, which have no conditions whatever, or which graciously supply the requirements that the conditional promises demand. Now, each class of these promises must be proved in a different and peculiar way. To begin with conditional promises: we can not prove a conditional promise in the same way as an absolute one. The manner of proving must accord with the character of the promise to be proved. Let me mention, for example—"Ask and ye shall receive." Here it is quite obvious that I must ask in order to verify the promise. I have a condition to fulfill in order to obtain a benefit. The way to test the faithfulness of the promiser, and the truth of the promise, is plainly this—comply with the stipulation. Very different is the promise, and equally different the proof, when God says, "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Here we have the simple—*will*—of the Almighty. Such a promise is to be proved in a very different manner from the fulfillment, on our part, of a condition; but of this more anon.

In order to prove conditional promises, then, it is necessary for us to fulfill the condition that God has annexed to them. He says, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith." No man can prove God with reference to this promise, till he has brought all the tithes into the storehouse; for it is herewith this promise has to be proved. Suppose the Lord says, "Call upon me in the time of trouble, I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify me;" the only way of proving him is by calling upon him in the time of trouble. We may stand as long as we like and say, "God will fulfill that promise;" ay, that he will, but we must fulfill the condition, and it behoves us to seek grace of him to enable us to do so; for we cannot prove such promises unless we fulfill the conditions

appended to them. There are many very sweet conditional promises; one of them helped to set my soul at rest, it was this, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." The condition there is, "Look unto me;" but ye can not prove it, unless you do look unto Christ. Here is another, "He that calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved." What a blessed promise that is! But then you can not prove the promise unless you call on the name of the Lord. So that whenever we see a promise to which a condition is attached, if we wish to prove it in our own experience, we must ask of God to give us grace to fulfill the condition. That is one way of proving God.

But some will say, do not these conditions restrict the liberality and graciousness of God's promises? Oh no, beloved! for first the conditions are often put to describe the persons to whom the promises are made. Hence, my brother, when it is written, "He forgetteth not the cry of the humble," the promise fits thy chastened soul. When it saith, "To this man will I look, even to him that is of a poor and contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word," thou canst perceive, as it were, a description of thine own state. And when it saith, "I will satisfy her poor with bread," ye can some of you take comfort that the promise finds you in the fit condition to receive the blessing. But again, if the condition be, not a state, but a duty; then, let it be prayer—he gives the spirit of prayer; let it be faith—he is the giver of faith; let it be meekness—he it is that clothes thee with meekness. Thus the conditions serve to commend the promises to God's own children, and to show the bounty of him who giveth grace for grace.

The second class of promises I will mention is *future*, and we cannot fully prove them yet, nor do we always wish it. Such a promise as this, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." We cannot prove this yet, for Christ has not appeared. We are told, and we know there is laid up for us a crown of righteousness at that day; how can we prove

that? Depend upon it, we ought to prove it, for we are commanded to prove God, and we must prove each of his promises. We must prove it, then, by patient waiting for him. I must say in myself, "All the days of my appointed pilgrimage I will wait, till my change come;" and I doubt not he will give me victory in death, for he has promised that he will make us sing aloud upon our beds, and will cheer us when we are passing through the valley of the shadow of death. Christian, prove God's promise of future blessedness, by a firm belief in it, and a patient waiting for it! Does Christ say he will come again "a second time without sin unto salvation?" Prove it by being among the number of those who look for his appearing, who patiently wait and hope for his advent. Does he say, that when we die we shall sleep in Jesus? We do prove this when we feel so confident of sleeping in Jesus that we are prepared to depart at any moment. You see that this kind of promise is to be proved in a different way from the conditional.

But then there is the absolute promise, and that is the largest and best promise of all, for if they were all conditional promises, and the conditions rested with us to fulfill, we should all be damned. If there were no absolute promises, there would not be a soul saved; if they were all made to characters, and no absolute promise were made that the characters should be given, we should perish, notwithstanding all God's promises. If he had simply said, "He that believeth shall be saved," we should all be lost, for we could not believe without strength; but when he says, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee," there is an absolute promise to back up the condition. If he hath told us that if we repent we shall be saved, there is the promise that he will give us a new heart—that he will draw us to himself and make us his people. Now, the absolute promise is not to be proved by doing any thing, but by believing in it. All I can do with an absolute promise is to believe. If I were to try to fulfill a condition, it would not be accepted by God, because no condition is appended to that kind of promise. He might well say to me, "If thou hast fulfilled the

condition of another promise, thou shalt have it; but stay, I have put no condition to this. I have said, "I will put my Spirit within them, and they shall walk in my ways; I will be their God, and they shall be my people." There is a promise without any condition. Although the child of God may have sinned, yet the promise stands good, that he shall be brought to know his error, to repent, and be wholly forgiven. Such a promise we can only believe; we can not fulfill any condition relating to it. We must take it to God, and say, Hast thou said that Christ shall "see of the travail of his soul?" (Isa. liii. 11.) Lord, we believe; let him see of the travail of his soul. Dost thou say, "My word shall not return unto me void?" Lord, do as thou hast said. Thou hast said it; Lord, do it. Has he said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out?" Then go and say, "Lord, I come now; do as thou hast said." On an absolute promise, I can tell thee, faith gets good foothold. Conditional promises often cheer the soul; but it is the absolute promise which is the rock that faith delights to stand upon. It is the firm, unfailing—*shall*—which asks nothing, but which is irresistible, just as it was said, "Let there be light, and there was light," by his own omnipotent fiat.

Now, beloved friends, what promise has been laid this day to your hearts? Many of you have got one that God gave you when you arose from your beds. What is thy promise, then? Is it a conditional one?—Say, "Lord, I beseech thee, fulfill the condition;" and if the promise be applied to thy soul with a condition, he will give thee the condition and the promise both, for he never gives by halves. Has he put into thy soul, "Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts?" He will give you grace to forsake your ways and your thoughts too He will not give you the conditional promise without in due time giving you the condition too. Is it laid on your heart? Well, ask of Him that ye may forsake your wicked ways and your unrighteous thoughts, and return to God. But hast thou an absolute promise laid to thy soul? Then thou art a happy man. Has God laid to thine inmost spirit some of those great

and precious promises, such as this: "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed"? Pause not to ask for conditions; take the promise just as it is. Go on thy knees and say, "Lord, thou hast said it." Again, hath the Lord promised, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;" plead it. Or art thou in trouble—search out the suitable promise, Thou hast said, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee." I believe thee, Lord! I am tried; but thou hast said I shall have no trial that I am not able to bear. Lord, give me all-sufficient grace, and make me more than conqueror. Go and prove God. Be not afraid with any amazement. If he gives a promise, he gives you an invitation to prove it. If he gives you a single word, he means that you should bring it to him and tell it to him again; for you know he has said, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Do, I beseech you, put the Lord in mind of his own promises, and he will most assuredly fulfill them. Here is a challenge to all the redeemed —"Prove me now."

III. In the third place, there is a *season* mentioned—"Prove me *now*." Do you know what is the most perilous time in a Christian's life? I think I could hit upon it in a moment—"now." Many persons—I might well nigh say all Christians—are ever most apprehensive of the present hour. Suppose they are in trouble, though they may have had ten times worse troubles before, they forget all about them, and now is the most critical day they ever knew. Or, if they are at ease, they say—

> "Far more the treacherous calm I dread
> Than tempests rolling o'er my head;"

and they think no position in life more dangerous than "now." The lions are before them—how great their danger! And when, a little while ago, they lost their roll in the arbor of ease, how dreadful it was then! And when they got to the slippery ground, going down hill, "now" seemed their great-

est danger. When they get a little further, and Apollyon meets them, "Here," they say, "is the worst trial of all." Then comes the valley of the shadow of death, and they say, "Now this is the most serious period of my life." In fact it is right that we should feel in some degree that "now" is just the time we ought to be guarded; yesterdays and to-morrows we may leave, but, "now" is the time we must be watchful. God has made no promises for yesterdays and to-morrows; he only makes such promises as he applies to our hearts now. God never lays to-morrow's promise on my heart to-day, because I am not in immediate want of it; the promises are given in the *time*, in the *place*, and in the *manner* he has designed and intended they should be answered. But no doubt some of you will sympathize with me when I say that "now" is just the time when the Christian thinks he can trust God the least. "Oh!" says he, "if I were in the same state as I was before, I should be happy. I do believe that I could have trusted my Master better then; but just now I can not lay my head so confidently on the Saviour's breast. I remember when I was sick how sweet the promises were. I could then say—

> "'Sweet to lie passive in his hands,
> And know no will but his.'

But now I am altered. Somehow or other a languor has come over me. I can not believe that I am a Christian." You compare yourself with some brother, and feel quite sure that if you were like him you would have faith. Go and speak to this brother, and he will say, "If I were like you I should be better off." And so they would change experiences, each failing to trust God under his own circumstances. But the Lord is pleased always to give us a word that suits the particular position we may be in: "Prove me now." To allegorize a moment. There is a ship upon the sea. It is the ship which the Lord has launched, and which he has said shall come to its desired haven. The sea is smooth; the waves ripple gently, and bear the bark steadily along. "Prove me now," says the Lord. The mariner stands on the deck and

says, "Lord, I thank thee that thou hast given me such smooth sailing as this; but ah! my Master, perhaps this very ease and comfort may destroy my grace." And a voice says, "Prove me now, and see if I can not keep thee amidst the storm." Anon the heavens have gathered blackness, the winds have begun to bluster, and the waves lift up their voice, while the poor ship is tossed to and fro on the yawning deep. Amid the screaming of the tempest and the howling of the winds, I hear a voice which says, "Prove me now." See, the ship is on the rock. She has been dashed upon it; she has been broken well nigh in sunder, and the mariner sees her hold filling with water, while all his pumps can not keep her empty. The voice still cries, "Prove me now." Alas! she well nigh sinks; another wave will be enough to swamp her; it seems as if one more drop would submerge her. Still the voice cries, "Prove me now." And the mariner does prove God, and he is delivered safely from all his distresses. "They reel to and fro," and "stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end;" but "*so* he bringeth them unto their desired haven." Now the ship is scudding merrily along before the wind, and, lo! she cometh to the verge of the horizon. The mists have gathered round her; strange phantoms dance to the waves of night; a lurid light flits through the shades; and anon the darkness comes again. Something broods about the ship that the mariner hath never seen before. The water is black beneath his vessel's prow; the air hangs damp and thick above him; the very sweat is clammy on his face. Fresh fear has got hold of him that he never felt before. Just then, when he knows not what to do, a voice cries, "Prove me now;" and so he does: he cries unto the Lord and is saved.

Ah, dear friends, I might give you a hundred illustrations. I think this old Bible speaks to me to-day. I have wielded it in your midst as God's soldier. This sword of the spirit hath been thrust into many of your hearts, and though they were hard as adamant, it has split them in sunder. Some of you have had sturdy spirits broken in pieces by this good old Jerusalem blade. Many a man has come during my ministra-

tions, armed to his very teeth, and having on a coat of mail, yet hath this tried weapon cleft him in twain, and pierced to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow. "Prove me now," says God, "go and prove me before blasphemers; go and prove me before reprobates, before the vilest of the vile, and the filthiest of the filthy; go and prove me now." Lift up that life-giving cross, and let it again be exhibited; into the regions of *death*, go and proclaim the word of *life;* into the most plague-smitten parts of the city, go and carry the waving censer of the incense of a Saviour's merits, and prove now whether he is not able to stay the plague and remove the disease. But what does God say to the church? "You have proved me aforetime, you have attempted great things; though some of you were faint-hearted, and said, we should not have ventured, others of you had faith and proved me. I say again, Prove me now." See what God can do, just when a cloud is falling on the head of him whom God has raised up to preach to you; go and prove him now—see if he will not pour out such a blessing as ye had not even dreamed of—see if he will not give you a Pentecostal blessing. "Prove me now." Why should we be unbelieving? Have we one thing to make us so? We are weak; what of that? Are we not strongest in our God when we are weakest in ourselves? We are fools, it is said, and so we are, we know it; but he maketh fools to confound the wise. We are base, but God has chosen the base things of the world. We are unlearned,—

"We know no schoolman's subtle art,"

yet we glory in infirmity when Christ's power doth rest upon us. Let them represent us as worse than we are; let them give us the most odious character that hath ever been given to man, we will bless them, and wish them good. What though the weapon be a stone, or even the jaw-bone of an ass, if the Lord direct it? Do you not know, say some, what wise men say? Yes, we do, but we can read their oracles backwards. Their words are the offspring of their wishes. We know *who* has instructed them, and we know *he* is a liar

from the beginning. O fools, and slow of heart! do you shrink from the truth, or do ye shrink from obloquy and disgrace? In either case ye have not the love to your Master you should have. If ye be brave men and true, go on and conquer. Fear not, ye shall win the day yet; God's Holy Gospel shall yet shake the earth once more. The banner is lifted up, and multitudes are flocking to it—the Pharisees have taken counsel together—the learned stand confounded—the sages are baffled. They know not what to do. The little one God has made great, and he that was despised is exalted. Let us trust him, then. He will be with us even to the end, for he has said, "Lo, I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world."

IV. The last division of my subject is an ARGUMENT, and I have trenched on that already—"Prove me now." Why should we prove God? Because, beloved, it will glorify him if we do. Nothing glorifies God more than proving him. When a poor hungry child of God, without a crust in the cupboard, says, "Lord, thou hast said bread shall be given me, and water shall be sure; I will prove thee,"—more glory is given to God by that simple proof of him than by the hallelujahs of the archangels. When some poor despairing sinner, who has been fluttering round the word, in hopes that he may—

> "Light on some sweet promise there,
> Some sure defence against despair,"

when such a one giveth credence to God's promise, in the very teeth of evidence against him, staggering not at the promise through unbelief, then he glorifies God. If thou art this morning in thy own apprehension an almost damned sinner, and thou feelest thyself to be the vilest of all, if thou wilt believe this, that Christ loves thee, and that Christ came to save thee, sinner as thou art, thou wilt glorify God as much by doing that as thou wilt be able to do, when thy fingers shall sweep across the strings of the golden harps of Paradise.

is in being singularly qualified for the duties of our holy Christian warfare, in being singularly courageous, and singularly ready, with the martyr-spirit, to peril ourselves for his service, that we may bring glory to God. God says, "Prove me now." Saint, wilt thou rob him of his honor? Wilt thou rob him of his honor? Wilt thou not do that which shall crown him, in the estimation of the world, with many more crowns? Oh, prove him, for by so doing thou wilt glorify his name.

Prove him again, for thou hast proved him before. Canst thou not remember that thou wast brought very low, and yet thou canst say, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles." What! wilt thou not prove him again? Mindest thou not the goodness thou hast proved? When thou saidst, "My feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped," did he not support thee, saying, "Nevertheless, I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand?" Has thy foot slipped? Canst thou not thus far witness to his mercy? then trust in it to hold thee up still. If he had once failed thee, I should not advise thee to trust him again; but since thou hast never found him fail thee, therefore, I say, go and prove him once more.

Again, accept this challenge, prove God's word, as he has called thee to do, and how much blessing it will give to thyself! Beloved brethren, we endure ten times as much anxiety in this world as we need, because we confide not in divine promise half as much as we might. If we were to live more on God's promise, and less on creature feelings, we should be happier men and women, all of us. If we were to get hold of a promise, and say, "There, let me abide by this; though the world says it is not true, I will believe it." Could we live alway in faith on the promises, the shafts of the enemy could never reach us. Let us constantly, then, seek to prove him. How much good Mr. Müller has done by proving God. He is called by God to a special work. What does he do? He builds an asylum and trusts to God. He has no regular income; but he says, I will prove to the world that God hears prayer. So he lives in the exercise of prayer; and though he

may at times be brought to his last shilling, yet there is never a meal that his children sit down to without sufficient bread. Our work may be different to his; but let us seek, whatever our work is, so to do it, that when any one reads of it he will say, he tried God in such and such a promise, and his life was a standing proof that that promise did not fail. Whatever your promise is, let your life be seen to be the working out of the problem which has to be proved, and like any one proposition of Euclid, which is stated at the beginning and proved at the end, so may we find a text put at the beginning of our lives as a promise to be fulfilled and seen at the close, demonstrated, proved, and carried out.

But, dear friends, I have really done. Let me just conclude by asking those here who have been brought to know their lost and ruined state, to remember this promise, "Prove me now." Thus saith my God unto thee, O sinner, "He that calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved." My dear hearer, art thou lost and ruined? Prove God now. He says, "Call upon me, and I will answer thee;" come now, and call upon him. He hath said, "Seek, and ye shall find;" oh, seek him now. "Knock," he says, "and it shall be opened unto you;" lift up the knocker of heaven's door and sound it with all thy might; or, suppose thou art too weak to knock, let the knocker fall down of itself. He has said, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Go, and prove the promise now. Try to prove it. He has said, "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are freely justified." Oh, poor soul, prove it. Art thou a poor, sick, and wounded sinner? You are told that Jesus Christ is able and willing to heal your wounds, and extract the poison from your veins. Prove him, prove him, poor soul. Thou thinkest thyself to be a lost one; therefore, I urge thee in Christ's name to prove this promise, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, and will not remember thy sins." Take this to him. Say, Thou hast said, O Lord, that "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I

am chief." O God, I want faith to trust thy word; I know thou dost mean what thou hast said; thou hast said this morning by the mouth of thy minister, "Prove me now;" Lord, I will prove thee now, this very day, even till nightfall if thou dost not answer me. I will still keep fast by thy promise—

"Lo, I must maintain my hold;
'Tis thy goodness makes me bold;
I can no denial take,
Since I plead, for Jesus' sake."

Go, my beloved, and ye will not be gone long before you will be able to sing—

"I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven;
I'm a miracle of grace."

Now, do not stand still and say, "God will not hear such an one as I; my disease is too bad for him to cure." Go and see, put your hand on the hem of his garment, and then, if the blood does not stanch, go and tell the world that thou hast proved God, and proved him wrong. Go and tell it, if thou durst. But oh! thou canst not. If thou dost touch the hem of his garment, I know what thou wilt say: "I have tasted that the Lord is gracious. He said, 'Trust in me, and I will deliver thee.' I have trusted in Him, and he has delivered me;" for the promise will always have its fulfillment—"Prove me now." "Prove me now," says God.

# SERMON III.

## MEDITATION ON GOD.

"My meditation of him shall be sweet."—PSALM, civ. 34.

DAVID, certainly, was not a melancholy man. Eminent as he was for his piety and for his religion, he was equally eminent for his joyfulness and gladness of heart. Read the verses that precede my text, "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord." It has often been insinuated, if it has not been openly said, that the contemplation of divine things has a tendency to depress the spirits. Religion, many thoughtful persons have supposed, doth not become the young; it checks the ardor of their youthful blood. It may be very well for men with gray heads, who need something to comfort and solace them as they descend the hill of life into the grave; it may be well enough for those who are in poverty and deep trial; but that it is at all congruous with the condition of a healthy, able-bodied, successful and happy man, this is generally said to be out of the question. Now, there is no greater falsehood. No man is so happy, but he would be happier still if he had religion. The man with a fullness of earthly pleasure, whose barns are full of store, and whose presses burst with new wine, would not lose any part of his happiness, had he the grace of God in his heart; rather, that joy would add sweetness to all his prosperity; it would strain off many of the bitter dregs from his cup; it would purify his heart, and freshen his taste for delights, and show him how to extract more honey from the honeycomb. Religion is a thing that can make the most melancholy joyful, at the same time that it can make the joyous ones more joyful still. It can make the gloomy bright, as it

gives the oil of joy in the place of mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Moreover, it can light up the face that is joyous with a heavenly gladness; it can make the eye sparkle with tenfold more brilliance; and happy as the man may be, he shall find that there is sweeter nectar than he has ever drunk before, if he comes to the fountain of atoning mercy; if he knows that his name is registered in the book of everlasting life. Temporal mercies will then have the charm of redemption to enhance them. They will be no longer to him as shadowy phantoms which dance for a transient hour in the sunbeam. He will account them more precious because they are given to him, as it were, in some codicils of the divine testament, which hath promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. While goodness and mercy follow him all the days of his life, he will stretch forth his grateful anticipations to the future, when he shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. He will be able to say, as our Psalmist does, "I will sing unto the Lord. I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet. I will be glad in the Lord."

Taking these few words as the motto of our sermon to-night, we shall speak, first, concerning a profitable exercise—*meditation.* Secondly, concerning the excellence of the subject—*my meditation of him.* Thirdly, concerning the desirable result—*my meditation of him shall be sweet.*

I. First, here is a very profitable exercise—MEDITATION.

Meditation is a word that more than half of you, I fear, do not know how to spell. You know how to repeat the letters of the word; but I mean to say, you can not spell it in the reality of life. You do not occupy yourselves with any meditation. What do many of you that are merchants know concerning this matter? You rise up in the morning, just in time to take your accustomed seat in the omnibus; you hasten to your counting-house for your letters, and there you continue all day long, for business when you are busy, or for gossip when business is dull, and at night you go home too tired and jaded for the wholesome recreation of your minds. Week by week, month by month, and year by year, it is still

with you one everlasting grind, grind, grind. You have no time for meditation; and you reckon, perhaps, that if you were to set apart half an hour in the day, to ponder the weighty matters of eternity, it would be to you a clear loss of time. It is very wise of you to economize your minutes, but I suppose if half an hour in a day could earn you a hundred pounds, you would not say you could not afford it, because you know how to estimate pecuniary profit. Now, if you really knew equally how to count the great profit of meditation, you would deem it a positive gain to yourselves to spend some time therein, for meditation is most profitable to the spirit; it is an extremely healthful and excellent occupation. Far from being idle time, it is judicious employment. Do not imagine that the meditative man is necessarily lazy; contrariwise, he lays the best foundation for useful works. He is not the best student who reads the most books, but he who meditates the most upon them; he shall not learn most of divinity who hears the greatest number of sermons, but he who meditates the most devoutly upon what he does hear; nor shall he be so profound a scholar who takes down ponderous volumes one after the other, as he who, reading little by little, precept upon precept, and line upon line, digests what he learns, and assimilates each sentiment to his heart by meditation—receiving the word first into his understanding, and afterwards receiving the spirit of the thing into his own soul. When he reads the letters with his eye it is merely mechanical, but that he may read them to his own heart he retires to meditate. Meditation is thus a very excellent employment; it is not the offspring of listlessness or lethargy, but it is a satisfactory mode of employing time, and very remunerative to the spirit. Let us for a moment or two tell you some of its uses.

First, I think meditation furnishes the mind somewhat with rest. It is the couch of the soul. The time that a man spends in necessary rest, he never reckons to be wasted, because he is refreshing and renovating himself for further exertion. Meditation, then, is the rest of the spirit. "Oh," says one, "I must have rest. Here have I been, fagging and toil-

ing incessantly for months; I must have a day's excursion; I must do this thing, and the other." Yes, and such recreation, in its proper place, is desirable; we ought to have seasons of innocent recreation; but, at the same time, if many of us knew how to spend a little time daily in the calm repose of contemplative retirement, we should find ourselves less exhausted by the wear and tear of our worldly duties,—to meditate, would be to us a salutary recreation, and instead of running ourselves out of breath, and laboring till a respite is compulsory, we should spread our intervals of ease and refreshing over the whole year, and secure a small portion every day, by turning aside from the bustling crowd to meditate upon whatever subject we wish to occupy the most honorable place in our mind. Just as a change of posture relieves the weariness of the body, a change of thoughts will prevent your spirits becoming languid. Sit down in a silent chamber at eventide, throw the window up, and look at God's bright stars, and count those eyes of heaven; or, if you like it better, pause in the noon-tide heat, and look down upon the busy crowd in the streets, and count the men like so many ants, upon the ant-hill of this world; or, if you care not to look about you, sit down and look within yourself, count the pulses of your own heart, and examine the motions of your own breast. At times, 'tis well to muse upon heaven; or if thou art a man who lovest to revel in the prophetic future, turn over the mystic page, and study the sacred visions recorded in the Book of Daniel, or the Book of Revelation. As thou dost enter into these hallowed intricacies, and dost meditate upon these impressive symbols, thou wilt rise up from thy study mightily refreshed. You will find it like a couch to your mind. You will return to your business in a better spirit; you may expect (other things being equal) to earn more that day, than you ever earned before, by the painful system of uninterrupted drudgery; for the diversion of thought will rest, string up, and brace your nerves, and enable you to do more work, and do it better too. Meditation is the couch of the mind.

Again, meditation is the machine in which the raw ma-

terial of knowledge is converted to the best uses. Let me compare it to a wine-press. By reading, and research, and study we gather the grapes; but it is by meditation we press out the juice of those grapes, and obtain the wine. How is it that many men who read very much know very little? What a host of pedantic scholars we have, who can recount book after book, from old Hesiod to the last volume in Ward's catalogue, but they know little or nothing after all. The reason is, they read tome upon tome, and stow away knowledge with lumbering confusion inside their heads, till they have laid so much weight on their brain that it can not work. Instead of putting facts into the press of meditation, and fermenting them till they can draw out inferences, they leave them to rot and perish. They extract none of the sweet juice of wisdom from the precious fruits of the vine-tree. A man who reads only a tenth part as much, but who takes the grapes of Eschol that he gathers, and squeezes them by meditation, will learn more in a week than your pedant will in a year, because he muses on what he reads. I like, when I have read a book for about half an hour, to walk awhile, and think it over. I shut up the volume, and say, "Now, Mr. Author, you have made your speech, let me think over what you have said. A little meditation will enable me to distinguish between what I knew before and the fresh subject you communicate to me—between your facts and your opinions—between your arguments and those I should make from the same premises." Animals, after they have eaten, lie down and ruminate; they first crop the grass, and afterwards digest it. So meditation is the rumination of the soul; thereby we get that nutriment which feeds and supports the mind. When thou hast gathered flowers in the field or garden, arrange them and bind them together with the string of memory; but take heed that thou dost put them into the water of meditation, else they will soon fade, and be fit only for the dunghill. When thou hast gathered pearls from the sea, recollect that thou wilt have gathered with them many worthless shells, and much mud; count them over, therefore, and sort them in thy memory; keep what are worth preserv-

ing, and even then thou must open the oyster to extract the pearl, and polish it to make it appear more beautiful. Thou mayest not string it in the necklace of thy mind, until it has been rubbed and garnished by meditation. Thus, we need meditation to make use of what we have discovered. As it is the rest of the soul, so it is, at the same time, the means of making the best use of what the soul has acquired.

Again, meditation is to the soul what oil was to the body of the wrestlers. When those old athletes went out to wrestle, they always took care before they went to oil themselves well—to make their joints supple and fit for labor. Now, meditation makes the soul supple—makes it so that it can use things when they come into the mind. Who are the men that can go into a controversy and get the mastery? Why, the men who meditate when they are alone. Who are the men that can preach? Not those who gad about and never commune with their own hearts alone; but those who think earnestly, as well when no one is near them as when there is a crowd around them. Who are the authors who write your books, and keep up the constant supply of literature? They are meditative men. They keep their bones supple and their limbs fit for exercise by continually bathing themselves in the oil of meditation. How important, therefore, is meditation as a mental exercise, to have our minds in constant readiness for any service.

I have thus pointed out to you that meditation is in itself useful to every man. But you did not come here to listen to a merely moral essay; you came to hear something about the Gospel of God; and what I have said already is but an introduction to what I have to say concerning the great necessity of meditation in religion. As meditation is good for the mind, even upon worldly topics and natural science, much more is it useful when we come to spiritual learning. The best and most saintly of men have been men of meditation. Isaac went out into the fields at eventide to meditate. David says, "As for me, I will meditate on thy statutes." Paul, who meditated continually, says to Timothy, "Give thyself to meditation." To the Christian meditation is most essential. I should almost

question the being of a Christian, and I should positively deny his well-being who lived without habitual meditation. Meditation and prayer are twin sisters, and both of them appear to me equally necessary to a Christian life. I think meditation must exist where there is prayer, and prayer would be sure to exist where there is meditation. My brethren, there is nothing more wanting to make Christians grow in grace now-a-days than meditation. Most of you are painfully negligent in this matter. You remind me of a sermon that one of my quaint old friends in the country once preached from that text—"The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting." He told us that many people who would hunt for a sermon, were too lazy to roast it by meditation. They knew not how to put the jack of memory through it, and then to twist it round by meditation before the fire of piety, and so to cook it and make it fit for your soul's food. So it is with many of you after you have caught the sermon: you allow it to run away. How often do you, through lack of meditation, miss the entire purpose for which the sermon was designed. Unless ye meditate upon the truths we declare unto you, ye will gather little sweetness, ye will acquire little profit, and, certainly, ye will be in no wise established therein to your edification. Can you get the honey from the comb until you squeeze it! You may be refreshed by a few words while you listen to the sermon, but it is the meditation afterwards which extracts the honey, and gets the best and most luscious savor therefrom. Meditation, my friends, is a part of the life-blood of every true Christian, and we ought to abound therein.

Let me tell you that there ought to be times of meditation. I think every man should set apart a portion of time every day for this gracious exercise. But, then, again I am met with an apology; you assure me that you have so much to do you cannot afford it. I generally treat with lightness the excuses of those who cannot afford time for obvious duties. If you have got no time you should make it. Let us see now, What time do you get up in the morning? Could you not manage to get up a quarter of an hour earlier? Well, yes! How long do you take for your dinner? So long. Then you

read some trashy publication, possibly. Well, why could you not spend that time in tranquil communion with your own soul? The Christian will ever be in a lean state if he has no time for sacred musings before his God. Those men who know most of God are such as meditate most upon him. Those who realize most experimentally the doctrines of grace, are those who meditate and soar beyond the reach of all sublunary things. I think we shall never have much advancement in our churches until the members thereof begin to accept habitually the counsel, "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers;" or that other, "Commune with your own heart in your chamber, and be still." Till the din and noise of business somewhat abate, and we give ourselves to calmer thought, and in the solemn silence of the mind find at once our heaven and our God, we must still expect to have regiments of dwarfs, and only here and there a giant. Giant minds can not be nourished by casual hearing; gigantic souls must have meditation to support them. Would ye be strong? Would ye be mighty? Would ye be valiant for the Lord, and useful in his cause? Take care that ye follow the occupation of the Psalmist, David, and meditate. This is a happy occupation.

II. Now, secondly, let us consider a very precious *subject*: "My meditation of HIM shall be sweet."

Christian! thou needest no greater inducement to excite thee than the subject here proposed: "My meditation of him shall be sweet." Whom does that word "him" mean? I suppose it may refer to all the three persons of the glorious Trinity? My meditation upon Jehovah shall be sweet! And, verily, if you set down to meditate upon God the Father, and reflect on his sovereign, immutable, unchangeable love towards his elect people—if you think of God the Father as the great author and originator of the plan of salvation—if you think of him as the mighty being who has said that by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for him to lie, he hath given us strong consolation who have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus—if you look to him as the giver of his only-begotten Son, and who, for the sake of that Son, his best gift, will, with him also,

freely give us all things—if you consider him as having ratified the covenant, and pledged himself ultimately to complete all its stipulations, in the ingathering of every chosen ransomed soul, you will perceive that there is enough to engross your meditation for ever, even were your attention limited to the manner of the Father's love. Or, if you choose it, you shall think of God the Holy Spirit; you shall consider his marvellous operations on your own heart—how he quickened it when you were dead in trespasses and sins—how he brought you nigh to Jesus when you were a lost sheep, wandering far from the fold—how he called you with such a mighty efficacy that you could not resist his voice—how he drew you with the cords of love. If you think how often he has helped you in the hour of peril—how frequently he has comforted you with the promise in times of distress and trouble; and, if you think that, like holy oil, he will always supply your lamp, and until life's last hour he will always replenish you with his influences, proving himself still your teacher and your guide till you get up yonder, where you shall see your Saviour face to face, in the blessed presence of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost—in such revelation you might find a vast and infinite subject for your meditation. But rather to-night I prefer to confine this word "him" to the person of our adorable Saviour. "My meditation of him shall be sweet." Ah! if it be possible that the meditation upon one person of the Trinity can excel the meditation upon another, it is meditation upon Jesus Christ.

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind.

"But if Immanuel's face appear,
My hope, my joy begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace forgives my sins."

Thou precious Jesus! what can be a sweeter theme for me, than to think of thine exalted being—to conceive of thee as

the Son of God, who with the golden compasses struck out a circle from space, and fashioned this round world? To think of thee as the God who holds this mighty orb upon thy shoulders, and art the King of Glory, before whom angels bow with modest homage; and yet to consider thee as likewise "bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh"—

"In ties of blood with sinners one."

To conceive of thee as the Son of Mary, born of a Virgin, wearing flesh like men, clothed in garments of humanity like mortals of our feeble race; to picture thee in all thy suffering life, in all the anguish of thy death; to trace thee in all thy passion; to view thee in the agony of Gethsemane, enduring the bloody sweat, the sore amazement; and then to follow thee to the pavement, and thence up the steep side of Calvary, bearing the cross, braving the shame, when thy soul was made an offering for my sins, when thou didst die the reconciling death 'midst horrors still to all but God unknown. Verily, here is a meditation for my soul, which must be "sweet" for ever. I might begin, like the Psalmist David, and say, "My heart is inditing of a good matter; it bubbleth up, while I speak of things which I have made touching the king; my tongue is as the pen of a ready writer." "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

Christ! Consider Christ in any way you please, and your meditation of him will be sweet. Jesus may be compared to some of those lenses you have seen, which you may take up and hold one way, and you see one light, and another way, and you see another light, and whichever way you turn them you will always see some precious sparkling of light, and some new colors starting up to your view. Ah! take Jesus for your theme; sit down and consider him; think of his relation to your own soul, and you will never get through that one subject. Think of his eternal relationship with you; recollect that the saints of Jesus were from condemnation free, in union with the Lamb, before the world was made. Think of your everlasting union with the person of Jehovah Jesus before this planet was sent rolling through space, and how your

guilty soul was accounted spotless and clean, even before you fell; and after that dire lapse, before you were restored, justification was imputed to you in the person of Jesus Christ. Think of your known and manifest relationship to him since you have been called by his grace. Think how he has become your brother; how his heart has beaten in sympathy with yours; how he has kissed you with the kisses of his love, and his love has been to you sweeter than wine. Look back upon some happy, sunny spots in your history, where Jesus has whispered, "I am yours," and you have said, "My beloved is mine." Think of some choice moments, when an angel has stooped from heaven, and taken you up on his wings, and carried you aloft, to sit in heavenly places where Jesus sits, that you might commune with him. Or think, if it please you, of some pensive moments, when you have had what Paul sets so much store by—fellowship with Christ in his sufferings. Think of seasons when the sweat has rolled from your brow, almost as it did from that of Jesus—yet not the sweat of blood—when you have knelt down, and felt that you could die with Christ, even as you had risen with him. And then, when you have exhausted that portion of the subject, think of your relationship in Christ, which is to be developed in heaven. Imagine the hour to have come when ye shall "greet the blood-besprinkled band on the eternal shore," and range the—

> "Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
> Array'd in living green."

Picture to your mind that moment when Jesus Christ shall salute you as "more than a conqueror," and put a pearly crown upon your head, more glittering than stars. And think of that transporting hour, when you will take that crown from off your own brow, and climbing the steps of Jesus' throne, you shall put it on his head, and crown him once more Lord of your soul, as well as "Lord of all." Ah! if you come and tell me you have no subject for meditation, I will answer, Surely, you have not tried to meditate; for "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

Suppose you have done thinking of him as he is related to you; consider him next as he is related to the wide world. Recollect that Jesus Christ says he came into the world to save the world, and undoubtedly he will one day save the world, for he who redeemed it by price and by power will restore it and renew it from the effects of the fall. Oh! think of Jesus in this relationship as the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in. He will come again to our earth one day; and when he comes he will find this world defaced still with the old curse upon it—the primeval curse of Eden. He will find plague, and pestilence, and war here still; but when he comes, he shall bid men "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks;" war shall be obliterated from among the sciences; he shall speak the word, and there shall be a company that will publish it. "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea." Jesus Christ shall come! Christians! be ye waiting for the second coming of your Lord Jesus Christ! and whilst ye wait, meditate upon that coming. Think, O my soul, of that august day, when thou shalt see him with all his pompous train, coming to call the world to judgment, and to avenge himself upon his enemies. Think of all his triumphs when Satan shall be bound, and death shall be crushed, and hell shall be conquered, and when he shall be saluted as the universal Monarch, "Lord over all, blessed for ever. Amen." "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

Ah! Christian! you are not afraid to be alone a little while now, for want of subjects of meditation! Some persons say they cannot bear to be an hour in solitude; they have got nothing to do, nothing to think about. No Christian will ever talk so, surely; for if I can but give him one word to think of—Christ—let him spell that over for ever; let me give him the word Jesus, and only let him try to think it over, and he shall find that an hour is nought, and that eternity is not half enough to utter our glorious Saviour's praise. Yea, beloved, I believe when we get to heaven we shall want no subject for meditation there, except Jesus Christ. I know there are

some great divines and learned philosophers who have been telling us that when we go to heaven we shall occupy our time in flying from star to star, and from one planet to another; that we shall go and see Jupiter, and Mercury, and Venus, and all the host of celestial bodies. We shall behold all the wonders of creation; we shall explore the depths of science, as they tell us, and there are no limits to the mysteries we shall understand. My reply to people who imagine thus of heaven, is, that I have no objection it should be so, if it will afford them any pleasure; I hope you will have, and I know my Father will let you have, whatsoever will make you happy. But, while you are viewing stars, I will sit down and look at Jesus; and if you told me you had seen the inhabitants of Saturn and Venus, and the man in the moon, I would say, Ah! yes—

> "But in His looks a wonder stands,
> The noblest glory of God's hands;
> God in the person of His Son
> Hath all His mightiest works outdone."

But you will say, You will become tired, surely, of looking at him. No, I should reply; I have been looking at but one of his hands, and I have not yet thoroughly examined the hole where one of the nails went in; and when I have lived ten thousand years more I will take his other hand, and sit down and look at each gaping wound, and then I may descend to his side and his feet:—

> "Millions of years my wond'ring eyes
> Shall o'er his beauties rove,
> And endless ages I'll adore
> The wonders of His love."

You may go flitting about as far as you like; I will sit there, and look at the God in human flesh, for I believe that I shall learn more of God and more of his works in the person of Jesus than you could with all the advantage of traveling on wings of light, though you should have the most elevated imaginations and the most gigantic intellects to help you in

your search. Brethren, our meditation of Christ will be sweet. There will be little else we shall want of heaven besides Jesus Christ. He will be our bread, our food, our beauty, and our glorious dress. The atmosphere of heaven will be Christ; everything in heaven will be Christ-like: yea, Christ is the heaven of his people. To be in Christ and to be with Christ is the essence of heaven:—

"Not all the harps above
Can make a heavenly place,
Should Christ His residence remove,
Or but conceal His face."

Here is the object of our meditation. "Our meditation of him shall be sweet."

III. Let me proceed to point out a blessed result—"Our meditation of him shall be SWEET." This depends upon the character very much. Ah! I know some persons come into chapel, who are very glad when they hear the minister pronounce the benediction, and dismiss the assembly; they are very glad when all is over, and they would rather hear the parting doxology than the text. As for a meditation on Christ, instead of saying it is sweet, they would say, It is precious dry. If they happen to hear an anecdote or a tale, they do not mind remembering that; but a meditation which should be entirely on Christ, would be dry enough to them, and they would be glad to hear it brought to a close. Ah! that is because of the taste you have in your mouth. There is something wrong about your palate. You know, when we have been taking some kind of medicine, and our mouth has been impregnated with a strong flavor, whatever we eat acquires that taste. So it is with you. You have got your mouth out of taste with some of the world's poor dainties; you have some of the powder of the apples of Sodom hanging on your lips, that spoils the glorious flavor of your meditation on Jesus. In fact, it prevents your meditating on Christ at all. It is only a hearing of the meditation with your ears, not a receiving it with your hearts. But here the Psalmist says, "My meditation of him shall be sweet." What a mercy, dear

friends, that there is something sweet in this world for us! We need it. For I am sure, as for most other things in the world, they are very, very bitter. There is little here that seems sweet at first, but what has some bitter flavor afterward; and there are too many things that are actually bitter, and void of any relish. Go through the great laboratory of this world and how many will be the cases that you will see marked bitter! There are perhaps more of aloes put in our cup than of any other ingredient. We have to take a great quantity of bitters in the course of our lives. What a mercy then it is, that there is one thing that is sweet! "My meditation of *him* shall be sweet; so sweet, beloved, that all the other bitters are quite swallowed up in its sweetness. Have I not seen the widow, when her husband has departed, and he who was her strength, the stay of her life and her sustenance, has been laid in the grave—have I not seen her hold up her hands, and say, "Ah! though he is gone, still my Maker is my husband; 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away;' blessed be his name!" What was the reason of her patient submission? Because she had a sweet meditation to neutralize the bitterness of her reflections. And do I not remember, even now, seeing a man, whose property had been washed away by the tide, and his lands swallowed up, and become quicksands, instead of being any longer profitable to him? Beggared and bankrupt, with streaming eyes, he held up his hands, and repeated Habbakuk's words, "Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, &c., &c., yet will I rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation." Was it not because his meditation on Christ was so sweet that it absorbed the bitterness of his trouble? And oh! how many, when they have come to the dark waters of death, have found that surely their bitterness was past, for they perceived that death was swallowed up in victory, through their meditation upon Jesus Christ! Now, if any of you have come here with your mouths out of taste, through affliction and trouble, if you have been saying with Jeremiah, "Thou has filled my mouth with gravel stones and made me drunken with worm-wood"—if so, take a little of his choice cordial; I assure you it is sweet; *Lacrymæ Christi*,

as it is called. If thou wilt take these tears of Jesus and put them in thy mouth, they will take away all the unpleasant flavor. Or again, I bid you take this meditation upon Christ, as a piece of scented stuff that was perfumed in heaven. It matters not what thou hast in thy house; this shall make it redolent of Paradise—shall make it smell like those breezes that once blew through Eden's garden, wafting the odor of flowers. Ah! there is nothing that can so console your spirits, and relieve all your distresses and troubles, as the feeling that now you can meditate on the person of Jesus Christ. "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

But, my dear hearers, shall I send you away without asking you whether you have ever had such a meditation upon our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? I do not like to preach a sermon, without pressing it home to the conscience of my hearers. I never like to bring you out a sword and show it you, and say, "There is a sword, and it is sharp;" I always like to make you feel that it is sharp, by cutting you with it. Would to God the sword of the Spirit might penetrate many of your hearts now! When I see so many gathered together even on a week-day, I am astonished. But wherefore have ye come, my brethren? What went ye out for to see? a reed shaken with the wind? What have ye come out for to see? a prophet? Nay, but I say that you have come to see something more than a prophet. You have come to see and hear somewhat of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Lord. How many of you meditate on Christ? Christian men and women, do you not live below your privileges, many of you? Are you not living without having choice moments of communion with your Jesus? Methinks, if you had a free pass to heaven's palace, you would use it very often; if you might go there and hold communion with some person whom you dearly loved, you would often be found there. But here is your Jesus, the king of heaven, and he gives you that which can open the gates of heaven and let you in to hold company with him, and yet you live without meditating upon his work, meditating upon his person, meditating upon his offices, and meditating upon his glory. Christian men and women! I say to you,

is it not time we should begin to live nearer to God? What is to become of our churches? I do not know what to think of Christendom at large. As I travel through the country and go here and there, I see the churches in a most awfully dwindled state. True, the Gospel is preached in most; but it is preached as it might be by humble-bees in pitchers—always the same monotonous sound, and no good is done. I fear that the fault lies in the pews, as well as in the pulpit. If hearers are meditative preachers must be meditative. It is very true that water does not run up-hill; but when you begin to meditate and pray over the word, your ministers will see that you have gone beyond them, and they will set to and meditate themselves, and give you the Gospel just as it comes fresh from their hearts, food for people's souls.

And for the rest of you—you who have never meditated on Jesus Christ—what do you think shall become of you when your bitterness shall be in your mouth? When you taste death, how do you hope to destroy its ill flavor? Yet "that last, that bttter cup which mortal man can taste" is but a dire presentiment. When you have to drink that gall in hell for ever—when the cup of torments which Jesus did *not* drain for you will have to be drained by yourself—what will you do then? The Christian can go to heaven, because Christ has drunk destruction dry for him; but the ungodly and unconverted man will have to drink the dregs of the wine of Gomorrah. What will you do then? The first drops are bad enough, when you sip here the drops of remorse on account of sin; but that future cup in hell—that terrific mixture which God deals out to the lost in the pit—what will you do when you have to drink that? when your meditation will be, that you rejected Jesus, that you despised his Gospel, that you scoffed at his word? What will you do in that dread extremity? Many of you business men! will you ledger serve you with a sweet meditation in hell? Lawyer! will it be sweet for you to meditate on your deeds when you go there? Laboring man! will it be a sweet meditation to thee, to think that thy wages were spent in drunkenness, or thy Sabbath profaned, and thy duties neglected? And thou,

professor! will it be a sweet meditation to sit down and think of thine hypocrisy? And ah! ye carnally minded men, who are indulging the flesh, and pampering the appetite, and not serving the Lord, "whose God is your belly, and whose glory is in your shame," will your career furnish a sweet meditation to you at last? Be assured of this: your sins must be your meditation, then, if Christ is not your meditation now. May there be great searchings of heart this night! How often do your convictions disperse like the smoke from the chimney, or the chaff from the winnower's hand; they soon vanish. It will not profit you to live at this rate—hearing sermons and forgetting them. Take heed to the voice of warning, lest God should say, "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy." O wicked men! wicked men! one word to you, all of you who know not God, and ye shall go. I will give you a subject for your meditation to-night. It shall be a parable. A certain tyrant sent for one of his subjects, and said to him, "What is your employment?" He said, "I am a blacksmith." "Go home," said he, "and make me a chain of such a length." He went home; it occupied him several months, and he had no wages all the while he was making the chain, only the trouble and the pains of making it. Then he brought it to the monarch, and he said, "Go and make it twice as long." He gave him nothing to do it with, but sent him away. Again he worked on, and made it twice as long. He brought it up again, and the monarch said, "Go and make it longer still." Each time he brought it, there was nothing but the command to make it longer still. And when he brought it up at last, the monarch said, "Take it, bind him hand and foot with it, and cast him into a furnace of fire." These were his wages for making the chain. Here is a meditation for you to-night, ye servants of the devil! Your master the devil is telling you to make a chain. Some of you have been fifty years welding the links of the chain; and he says, "Go and make it longer still. Next Sunday morning you will open that shop of yours, and put another link on; next Saturday night you will be drunk, and put another link

on; next Monday you will do a dishonest action, and so you will keep on making fresh links to this chain; and when you have lived twenty more years, the devil will say, "More links on still!" And then, at last, it will be, "Take him, and bind him hand and foot, and cast him into a furnace of fire." "For the wages of sin is death." There is a subject for your meditation. I do not think it will be sweet; but if God makes it profitable, it will do good. You must have strong medicines sometimes, when the disease is bad. God apply it to your hearts!

# SERMON IV.

## PARDON AND JUSTIFICATION.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."—PSALM xxxii. 1.

FEW men judge things aright. Most people measure by appearances; few know the test of reality. We pronounce the man blessed who grasps the scepter or wears the crown; whereas, perhaps, no peasant in his dominions enjoys less happiness than he does. We pronounce that man blessed who has uninterrupted and perpetual health; but we know not the secret gnawings of the heart, devoured by its own anguish, and embittered by a sorrow that a stranger can not perceive. We call the wise man happy, because he understandeth all things, from the hyssop on the wall to the cedar of Lebanon; but he saith, "Of making many books there is no end," and "much study is a weariness of the flesh." We are all for pronouncing our neighbor's lot happier than our own. As Young says of mortality, "All men think all men mortal but themselves," we are apt to think all men happy but ourselves. But oh! if we could see things as they are—if we were not deceived by the masquerade of this poor life—if we were not so easily taken in by the masks and dresses of those who act in this great drama, be it comedy or tragedy—if we could but see what the men are behind the scenes, penetrate their hearts, watch the inner motions, and discern their secret feelings, we should find but few who could bear the name of "blessed;" indeed, there are none except those who come under the description of my text, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." He is blessed, thrice blessed, blessed for evermore, blessed of heaven, blessed of earth, blessed for time, blessed for eternity. The man

whose sin is not forgiven is not blessed,—the mouth of Jehovah hath said it, and God shall manifest that—cursed is every man whose transgression is not forgiven, whose sin is not covered.

Dearly beloved, we come to the consideration of that most excellent and choice blessing of God, which bespeaks our pardon and justification; and we trust that we shall be able to show you its extreme value.

And first, the blessedness of the person enjoying this mercy will appear, if we consider the exceeding value of it in its nature and its characteristics. Then if we notice the things that accompany it, and afterwards, if we muse upon the state of heart which a sense of forgiveness would engender, we shall see that indeed a man must be blessed whose sin is covered, and whose transgression is taken away. Let us first look at the blessing as it is. *It is an unpurchaseable blessing.* No one could purchase the pardon of his sin. What though we should each offer a hecatomb to our God? the sacrifice would smoke in vain, for Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof for a burnt offering. If we could make rivers of oil wide as the Amazon and long as the Mississippi, we could not offer them to God as an acceptable present, for he would be careless of its value. We might bring money in vain, for he saith the "Silver and gold are mine;" no oblation can add to his wealth, for he saith "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof." These are God's own creatures; we could but offer to him what he did create. Nothing man can present by way of sacrifice can ever purchase the blessing.

Then consider, *the utter difficulty of procuring the blessing in any way.* Since it is not to be purchased, how can it be procured? Here is a man to-night who has sinned against God, and he makes the inquiry, "How can I be pardoned? How can I be forgiven?" The first thought which starts up in his mind is this, "I will seek to amend my ways; in the virtue of the future I will endeavor to atone for the follies of the past, and I trust a merciful God will be disposed to forgive

my sins, and spare my guilty but penitent soul." He then turns to Scripture to see if his hopes are warranted, and he reads there, "By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." "They sought salvation, not by faith, but by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence.' He fancies that if he should reform and amend his life, he will be accepted, but there comes from the throne of God a voice which says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "Having sinned, O man," says God, "I must inflict punishment for thy sin." God is so inflexibly just that he has never forgiven and never will forgive the sinner without having exacted the punishment for his sin. He is so strictly true to his threatenings, and so unutterably severe in his justice, that his Holy Law never relaxes its hold upon the sinner till the penalty is paid, and vengeance has exacted its utmost farthing. "Well," says the sinner, "I can not redeem the past: what must I do? If I amend for the future, there is the dark catalogue of past offences still pursuing me. Even if I run up no other debts, there are the old accounts. How can I get them paid? How can I get past sins forgiven? How can I find my way to heaven?" Then he thinks, "I will seek to humble myself before God; I will cry and lament, and I hope, by deep penitence and heartfelt contrition, and by perpetual floods of tears, God may be induced to pardon me." O man! Though thy tears drop on the black list of thy sins one by one, they will not blot out a single sin. Those sins are engraved in brass—these tears are not a liquid strong enough o burn out what God has thus inscribed. Thou mightest weep till thy very eyes were wept away, and until thy heart were all distilled in drops, and yet not remove one single stain from the brazen tablet of the memory of Jehovah.

"Could thy tears for ever flow,
Could thy zeal no respite know,
All for sin could not atone:
Christ must save and he alone."

There is no atonement in tears or repentance. God has not

said, "I will forgive you for the sake of your penitence." What is there in thy penitence that can make you deserve forgiveness? If you deserved forgiveness you would have a set-off against your guilt. This were to suppose some claims upon God, and there would be no mercy in giving you what you could claim. Repentance, of itself, is not an atonement for sin. What, then, can be done? Justice says, "Blood for blood; a stroke for every sin, blood for every crime." Thus saith the Lord, "I will by no means clear the guilty." The sinner feels within his heart that the judgment is just; like the man to whom I talked some time ago, who said, "If God does not damn me, he ought. I have been so great a sinner against his laws that his equity would be sullied by my escape." The sinner, when convicted in his own conscience, must own the righteousness of God in his condemnation. He knows that he has been so wicked, he has sinned so much against heaven, that God in justice must punish him. He feels that God can not pass by his sin and his trangression. Then there must be an atonement, in order to obtain pardon, he thinks; who shall effect it? Speed your way up to heaven. It is vain to ask it on earth. Go up there, where cherubs stand around the throne of God. Ask one by one the brilliant spirits, and say, "Can ye offer an atonement? God has said, man must die; and the sentence can not be altered: God himself can not reverse it, for it is like the laws of the Medes and Persians, irrevocable. Punishment must follow sin, and damnation must be the effect of iniquity. Thou blazing seraph, wilt thou quench thy glories for a moment and descend to hell? But then it would not be for a moment; for thou shouldst tarry there for ever; thou must be eternal ages long in bearing the punishment of only one soul. Therefore, O seraph! I would not ask thee. Besides, thou art not a man; and the Scripture says, '*It* shall die.' No satisfaction would it yield if thou didst die. Ye angels, I have no hope from you." I must turn my eye in another direction. Where shall I find help? Where shall I obtain deliverance? Man can not help me; angels can not. The greatest archangel can do nought for us. Where shall we find forgiveness? Where

is the priceless prize? The mine hath it not in its depths. Stars have it not in their brilliance. The floods can not tell me as they lift up their voice; nor can the hurricane's blast discover to me the mystery profound. It is hidden in the sacred counsels of the Most High. Where it is I know not, until from the throne of God I hear it said, "I am the substitute!" And looking up there, I see sitting on the throne a God and yet a man—a man who once was slain! I see his scarred hands and his yet open side. But he is a God, and, smiling benignantly, he says, "I have forgiveness, I have pardon; but I purchased it with blood. This heart was riven for it; this precious casket of divinity was broken open for your souls. I had to die—the just for the unjust. Excruciating agony, pains unutterable, and woes such as ye can not comprehend, I had to suffer for your sake." And can I say, this amazing grace is mine? Has he enrolled my worthless name in the covenant? Do I see the blood mark on the writ of my pardon? Do I know he purchased it with such a price? And shall I refuse to say, "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered?" Nay; I must and will exult, for I have found this jewel, a jewel before which diadems do pale and lose their lustre. I have found this "pearl of great price;" and I must and will esteem all things but lost for Jesus' sake; for, having found this unpurchaseable mercy, this blessing which could not be bought except with blood, I must shout again, "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven." It would be well for thee, Christian, if thou wouldst often review this mercy, and see how it was purchased for thee; if thou wouldst go to Gethsemane and see where the bloody clots lie thick upon the ground; if thou wouldst then take thy journey across that bitter brook of Kedron and go to Gabbatha, and see thy Saviour with his hair plucked by the persecutors, with his cheeks made moist with the spittle of his enemies, with his back lacerated by the deep ploughings of knotted whips, and himself in agony, emaciated, tormented; then, if thou wouldst stand at Calvary and see him dying, "the just for the unjust;" and having seen these bitter torments remember that these were but little

compared with his inward and soul-anguish; then thou wouldst come away and say, "Blessed, yea, thrice blessed, is the man who has thus been loved of Jesus, thus purchased with his blood—'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven whose sin is covered.'"

Another thing concerning this blessing of justification is not only its immense value and its unpurchaseableness, but it coming to us instantaneously. You know it is a doctrine that has been taught by divines long enough, and taught in Scripture, that justification is an instantaneous act. I am perhaps this moment unjustified. The moment God gives me faith, I become justified; and being justified by faith I have peace with God. It takes no time to accomplish it. Sanctification is a lifelong work, continually effected by the Holy Ghost; but justification is done in one instant. It is as complete the moment a sinner believes as when he stands near the lamps that smoke before the Eternal. Is it not a marvelous thing that one moment should make thee clean? We love the physician who heals speedily. If you find a skillful physician who can heal you of a sad disease even in years, you go to him, and are thankful. But suppose some wondrous man who with a touch could heal you, who with the very glance of his eyes could make you well at once, and stanch that blood or stop that disease, or turn aside that evil thing and make you well, would you not go to him, and feel that he was a great physician indeed? So with Christ. There shall be a man standing there with all his sins upon his head, and he may yet go down these stairs just, complete in Christ, without a sin, freed from its damning power, delivered from all his guilt and iniquity, in one single instant! It is a marvelous thing, beyond our power and comprehension. It is done in an instant. God stamps it; the man is pardoned. He goes away in that same instant justified, as the publican did when he said, "Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner," and received the mercy for which he sued.

But one of the greatest things about it is, *that it is irreversible.* This is the sweetness of it. The irreversible nature of justification is what makes it so lovely in the eyes of God's

people. We are justified and pardoned, and then the mercy is that we never can be unpardoned—we never can be condemned. Those who are opponents of this glorious doctrine may say what they please; but we know better than to suppose that God ever pardons a man, and punishes him afterward. We should not think Her gracious Majesty would have a criminal before her, and give him a free and full pardon, and then in the course of a few years bring him up and have him executed. "But," say you, "the man commits fresh crimes and iniquities; and though the pardon may suffice for the past, it will not do for the future." Well, if you have got that sort of pardon, you may go and rejoice in it. I thank God I have a different one. I can say, and all God's believing people can say,

"Here's pardon for transgressions past;
It matters not how black their cast:
And, O my soul! with wonder view,
For sins to come there's pardon too."

It is complete washing that Jesus gives—from that which is to come, as well as that which is past.

"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Salvation in full through his blood."

God never did anything by halves. He speaks a man into a justified condition, and he will never speak him out of it again; nor can that man be cast away. Good God! and do any persons teach that men can be quickened by the Spirit, and yet that quickening Spirit has not power enough to keep them? Do they teach that God forgives, and then condemns? Do they teach that Christ stands surety for a man, and yet that man is damned himself on his own responsibility? Ah! let them teach it! We speak not thus; we have not so learned Christ. We can not use words so derogatory to divinity, so dishonorable to the blessed Saviour. We believe that

if he stood our substitute, it was an actual, real, effectual deed; that we are positively delivered thereby; that if he did pay the penalty, God can not by any means exact it twice; that if he did discharge the debt, it is discharged, and can not be revived; that if the sin was imputed to Christ, he did suffer for it. We say before all men that heaven itself can not accuse the sons of God any more of sin. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect, if God hath justified, and Christ hath died? Ah, Christian! thou mayest stand and wonder at this mighty justification, to think that thou art so pardoned that thou never canst be condemned, that all the powers in hell can not condemn thee, that nothing which can happen can destroy thee; but that thou hast a pardon that thou canst plead in the day of judgment, and that will stand as valid then as now. Oh, it is a glorious and gracious thing! Go, ye who believe in another gospel, and seek comfort. Yours is not the justification of the blessed God. When he justifies, he justifies for ever, and nothing can separate us from his love.

Well, this is the mercy itself. I have only made three remarks upon it, though there are some fifty that one might make, and each of them might be pregnant with meaning. Now we come to the second thing. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," BECAUSE THAT MERCY BRINGS EVERYTHING ELSE WITH it. When I know I am pardoned, then I can say all things are mine. I can look back to the dark past—all things are mine there! I can look at the present—all things are mine here! I can look into the deep future—all things are mine there! Back in eternity, I see God unrolling the mighty volume, and lo! in that volume I read my name. It must be there, for I am pardoned; for whom he calls, he had first predestinated, and whom he pardons, he had first elected. When I see that covenant roll, I say, It is mine! And all the great books of eternal purposes and infinite decrees, are mine! And what Christ did upon the cross is mine! The past is mine! The revolutions of past ages have worked for the good of me and of my brethren—all things are mine there! Standing in the present, I

see Providence, and that is mine! Its various circumstances are working together for good. Its very wheels—though high and wonderful—are working, wheel within wheel, to produce some great and grand effect which shall be for the general good of the church. Afflictions are mine to sanctify me—a hot furnace where my dross is taken away. Prosperity is mine to comfort me—a sweet garden where I lie down to be refreshed in this weary journey. All the promises are mine. What though this Bible be the prince of books—what though each letter be a drop of honey, and it be filled with sweetness, there is not a precious text here which is not mine, if I am a believer; there is not a promise which I may not say is my own—all is mine! All these present things I may take without fear, for they are my Father's gift to me, a portion of my heritage! I rejoice also to know that all of the future is mine, whatever that future may be. I know that in the future there shall come an hour when at God's mandate the hot breasts of earth shall start up from between her brazen ribs—her mountains themselves shall be dissolved, and the earth shall pass away. But this great conflagration is mine! I know that on a certain day I shall stand before the judgment bar of Christ—that judgment day is mine! I fear it not, and dread it not. I know that soon I must die—but the river of death is mine! It is mine to wash me, that I may leave the dust of earth behind, and take my garments clean washed afterward, having swam through this glorious river; for it is a glorious river, though its waters may be tinged with blackness—it takes its rise in the mountains of love, hard by the throne of God. And then after death there comes a resurrection—and that resurrection is mine! With a bright body, clear as the sun, and fair as the moon, I shall live in paradise. And then, whatever there is in heaven is mine! If there be a city with azure light, with jasper wall—it is mine! What though there be palaces there of crystal and o gold, that sparkle so as to dim mortal eyes; what though there be delights above even the dream of the voluptuary· what though there be pleasures which heart and flesh could not conceive, and which even spirit itself can not fully enjoy,

the very intoxication of bliss; what though there be sublimities unlawful for us to utter, and wonders which mortal men can not grasp; what though the Divinity hath spent itself in heaven, and doth unravel his glory to make his people blessed —all is mine! There is not a crown that is bright and glorious but it is mine! For I am pardoned! Though I may have been the chief of sinners, and the vilest of the vile, if God justify me to-night, all things in heaven are mine, however glorious, bright, majestic, and sublime. Oh! is not this a mercy! Verily, "blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," as we consider what comes with the mercy.

We would that time and bodily strength permitted us to dilate upon this, for it is a wide subject; but we must pass on to the next point. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered," BECAUSE IT MAKES HIM BLESSED BY THE EFFECTS IT HAS UPON HIS MIND. What glorious peace it brings to a man when he first knows himself to be justified! The apostle Paul said, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Some of you do not know what peace means; you never had any real, satisfactory peace. "What," say ye, "never had any peace, when we have been happy and merry and joyous?" Let me ask you, when the morning has appeared after your evening of mirth, could you look back upon it with joy? Could you look upon it and say, "I rejoice in these unbridled revelings. I always find laughter productive of a sweet calm to my heart?" No; you could not, unless you are hardened. I challenge you rather to tell me what fruit have ye ever gathered from those things whereof ye are now ashamed? Ye had not any peace. When alone in your chamber, a leaf fell, or some little insect buzzed in the further corner: ye trembled like the leaves of the aspen. Ye thought perhaps the angel of death was there with a dreary omen. Or passing from the haunts of fashion, ye have walked some lonely road in solitude, and how then did your disordered fancy conjure up all sorts of evil demons! Ye had no peace, and ye have no peace even now. Some of you know not peace with God

Ye are at war with the Omnipotent; ye are lifting your puny hand against the Most High God. To-night ye are warriors against the King of Heaven, rebels to his government, and guilty of a great act of high treason against the Eternal Majesty. Oh! if ye did but know peace with God—that "peace which passeth all understanding." I compare not the peaceful mind to a lake without a ripple. Such a figure would be inadequate. The only comparison I can find is in that unbroken tranquility which seems to reign in the deep caverns and grottoes of the sea—far down where the sailor's body lies, where the sea-shells rest undisturbed, where there is nought but darkness, and where nothing can break the spell, for there are no currents there, and all is still—that is somewhat like the Christian's soul when God speaks to him. There may be billows on the surface, by these he may be sometimes ruffled, but inside the heart there will be no ebb or flow; he will have "eternal peace with God," a "peace that passeth all understanding," too deep to fathom, too perfect to conceive, for none but they who prove it know: such peace that you could to-night lay your head down to sleep with the knowledge that you would never wake again in this world as calmly as you could if you knew your days were like Hezekiah's, lengthened out for a certainty of fifteen years. When we have peace with God, we can lie down, and if an angel visited us to say, "Soul, your Master calls you," we could reply, "Tell my Master, I am ready. And if grim death were to come stalking to our bed-side, and were to say, "The pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the well is broken at the cistern: thou shalt die!" we might answer, "Die! we die willingly; we are prepared; we are not afraid; we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; we have peace here, and we are willing to go and have that peace consummated up yonder in the better world." Could you say that, some of you? You know you could not. If I were to go round and ask you, you would have to say, "No; I am in an unsettled state of mind. I am afraid. I have no pardon, no forgiveness; I do not know that my sins are blotted out." Well, poor soul! at any rate you will say, "Blessed is

the man whose sin is covered." You know he is blessed, though you are not blessed yourselves; you feel you would be blessed indeed if you could once get your sins covered, and your transgressions taken away.

But it not only gives peace, it gives joy; this is something more. Peace is the flowing of the brook, but joy is the dashing of the cataract when the brook is filled, bursts its banks, and rushes down the rocks. Joy is something that we can know and esteem; and justification brings us joy. Oh! have you ever seen the justified man when first he is justified? I have often told you what I felt myself when first I realized pardon through the blood of Christ. I had been sad and miserable for months, and even years; but when I once received the message, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth," verily, I could have leapt for joy of heart; I felt that I understood that text, "The mountains and hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." I remember hearing Dr. Alexander Fletcher, when speaking to children, tell them a simple anecdote in order to illustrate the joy of a man when he gets delivered from sin. He said, "I saw upon the pavement three or four little chimney-sweeps jumping about and throwing up their heels in great delight. And I asked them, 'My boys, what are you making all this demonstration for?' 'Ah! said they, 'if you had been locked up for three months, you would do the same when you once got out of prison.'" I thought it a good illustration. We can not wonder that people are joyous and glad when, after being long shut up in the prison of the law, all sad and miserable, they have felt their bonds broken, seen the door of the jail opened, and obtained a legal discharge. What heed they about trials and troubles, or anything else? They could leap over the mountains: "By our God we leap over a wall," may they say. "A troop may overcome, but we shall overcome at last." The heart seems scarcely big enough to hold the joy, and it bursts out, hardly knowing what to do or say. Thus it is at that wondrous hour which comes but once in a Christian's life, when he first feels himself delivered, when God for the

first time says to him, "I am he that blotteth out all thy transgressions for my name's sake!" I verily think that hour is a fragment of eternity cut off and given us here; I am sure it is a foretaste of the happiness at God's right hand. It is a day of heaven upon earth, that splendid moment when God first gives us a knowledge of our own justification—Heaven's bliss itself can scarce exceed it! We seem to drink of the very wine that saints in glory quaff! We want nothing else—what can we desire more? "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered;" it gives him joy, it gives him peace.

And have you ever noticed one thing that I must mention here? If you have ever had a great trouble, you have found that it has swallowed up all little troubles. Suppose a sailor has something on deck that is not quite right; he fidgets and worries himself about this, that, and the other. A storm comes. Big clouds appear, and the winds begin to whistle through the cordage. The sails are rent, and now the ship is driving before the wind over mountains and into valleys of water; he fears that the ship will be wrecked, and that he will be lost. What cares he now for the things on deck, for the cabin, or the furniture? "Never mind about these," he says, "the ship is being lost!" And suppose the cook to run up and say, "I am afraid the dinner will be spoiled." What heeds he? "The ship," he says, "may be lost, and that is of much more consequence than the dinner." So with you. If you once get into sore trouble on account of your souls, you will not fret much about the little troubles you have here, for they will all be swallowed up by the one giant alarm. And if you get this everlasting joy into your souls, it will be much the same; it will consume all your smaller joys and griefs That joy will be like Moses' rod, which ate up all the serpents that the magicians threw down before Pharaoh—it will eat up all other joys. It will be enough if you can say—

"I'm forgiven! I'm forgiven!
I'm a miracle of grace."

If you can but feel yourself justified; if you know that you

are delivered, that you are indeed pardoned, that you are beyond the clutches of the law, you can rejoice that you know and feel the truth of the saying, "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered."

Now, let me ask in conclusion, How many such blessed men and women are there here to-night? How long shall I give you to answer the question? I wish preaching were done away with, and that we had a little more talking to one another. I wish to lay the formalities of the pulpit aside, and talk to you as if you were in your own houses. That, I believe, is the true kind of preaching. Let me inquire, then, how many of you, my friends, can claim the title of "blessed," because you are justified? Well, I think I can see one brother who puts his hands together and says—

> "'A debtor to mercy alone—
> Of covenant mercy I sing.'

I know I am forgiven." My brother, I rejoice at it. I rejoice to hear thee speak thus confidently. But, I come to another, and I ask, What are you? "Ah! I cannot say as much as that brother did, but I hope I am justified." What ground have you for your hope? You know we cannot hope unless we have some grounds. We may wish, but we cannot hope. What are your grounds? Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? "Yes," say you, "I do believe on him." What do you say "hope" for, then? Dear brother or sister, you *know* if you really believe in Christ, you have no need to talk about *hope* when you may be certain. And it is always better to use words of confidence when you can, and use little ones when you can't. Keep your head as high as you may, for you will find troubles enough to bring it down. But the next one replies:—Ah!

> "Tis a point I long to know,
> Oft it causes anxious thought.
> Do I love the Lord or no?
> Am I his, or am I not?"

I have heard a great deal said against that hymn. But I have

had occasion to sing it myself sometimes, so I cannot find much fault with it. That state of mind is all very well if it lasts a little while, though not if it lasts a long time. If a man is always saying, "I long to know," or, "I am afraid," he never will know unless he gets a change. The Scripture says, "He that is justified by faith has peace with God." You would not have this distress always if you were brought to realize your justification. You may have it sometimes when the eye of faith is dim; but I do not like to see people contenting themselves with any measure of faith short of that which apprehends full redemption. Do not let me distress the little ones, for be it known I often say—

> "Thousands in the fold of Jesus,
> This attainment ne'er can boast:
> To his name eternal praises,
> None of them shall e'er be lost."

Their names were written in the Lamb's book of life before the world was made; but if any of you are always in distress and doubt, if you never did at any time feel confident, I should begin to be apprehensive, for methinks you should now and then get a little higher. You may pass through the valley of the shadow of death sometimes, but surely sometimes also, the Spirit of God will carry you up to the top of the mountain that is called "Clear." And yet, if you are still dwelling on this point, "I long to know," are you not anxious to settle the question? Suppose you do not belong to Christ. Put it in that way—for in a doubtful case it is best to look at the worst side—suppose you do not love the Lord. Nevertheless, you are a sinner; you feel you are a sinner, do you not? God has convinced you that you are a sinner. Well, as long as you can claim sinnership, you can go to his feet. If you cannot go as a saint, you can go as a sinner. What a mercy this is! It is enough to save us from despair. Even if our evidence of saintship seems clean gone, we have not lost our sinnership; and the Scripture still says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." And while it

says that, we will hang on it. But another one says, "I don't know whether I am justified, and I don't care much about it." Let me tell you, sir, when you will care. When you come near your end, young man, you will care then. You may think to live very well without Christ, but you cannot afford to die without him. You can stand very securely at present, but death will shake your confidence. Your tree may be fair now, but when the wind comes, if it has not its roots in the Rock of Ages, down it must come. You may think your worldly pleasures good, but they will then turn bitter as wormwood in your taste; worse than gall shall be the daintiest of your drinks, when you shall come to the bottom of your poisoned bowl. But there is another, who says, "I wish I were justified, but I feel I am too great a sinner." Now, I like to hear the first part, but the last is very bad. To say that you are bad is right; I know you are. You say you are vile, and that is true enough, I'm sure, and I hope you mean it. Do not be like some men I have read of. You know there was a monk who, on a certain occasion, described himself as being as great a hypocrite as Judas; and a gentleman at once said, "I knew it long ago; you are just the fellow I always thought." When up jumped the monk, and said, "Don't be saying such things as those of me!" His humility was feigned, not felt. Thus people may make such a general confession as this, "I am a great sinner," who would still resist any special charge brought home to their consciences, however true. Say to such a one, "You are a rogue," and he replies, "No, I'm not a rogue." "What are you, then? Are you a liar?" "Oh, no!" "Are you a Sabbath-breaker?" "No; nothing of the kind." And so, when you come to sift it, you find them sheltering themselves under the general term sinner, not to make confession, but to evade it. This is very different from a real conviction of sin. But if you feel yourself to be a real, actual sinner, remember you are not too bad to be saved, because it is written in Scripture that Christ came to save sinners; and that means that he came to save you, because you are a sinner. And I will preach it everywhere, without limitation, that if a man knows

himself to be a sinner, Jesus Christ died for him, for that is the evidence that Christ came to save him. Let the sinner, then, believe on Jesus as his Savior; let the outcast come to Jesus, for it is said, "I will gather together the outcasts of Israel." There is an outcast here to night; there is a backslider over there who has been cut off from the church years ago. Behold his sad plight. As Achish said of David, "His own people Israel have utterly abhorred him. He shall be my servant for ever." But he shall escape yet. The prey shall not be taken from the mighty; the lawful captive shall not be taken from Jesus Christ. The Captain of our salvation conquered his soul once, and he will yet save it.

But another says, "I never was a member of a church, and I am afraid I never shall be. I am a hardened sinner, a reprobate." Well, do you confess it? Then hear the word of the Lord: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." "He that believeth,"—mark you, that is, he that believeth *on* Jesus and *in* Jesus; he that casts himself on Christ. Our hymn says, he who "ventures" on Christ, but that is not right. There is no venturing; it is all safe. He who puts himself on Christ—throws himself flat on sovereign mercy—"he that believeth;" notice what follows, "and is baptized;"—baptism is to come afterward, not for merit, but as a mode of profession—he that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth confesseth—he that believeth and is baptized—shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned. I dare not leave any word out, whatever any of my brethren may do. Whether a man be baptized or not, if he does not believe he shall be damned. But the word "baptized," is not put into the last sentence, because the Holy Spirit saw there was no necessity for it For he knew, if the ordinance were correctly administered, that no person who did not believe would be baptized. So it was the same thing as putting it in, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Oh, may God grant that you may never know the meaning of that last dreadful word; but may you know what it is to be saved by grace divine!

# SERMON V.

## THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."—PSALM, XXIII. 1.

DOES not this sound just like poetry or like singing? If you read the entire psalm through, it is written in such easy prose, that though it is not translated into meter, as it should have been, it reads just like it. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters; he restoreth my soul, and leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." It sounds like music for this, among other reasons—because it came from David's heart. That which cometh from the heart always hath melody in it. When men speak of what they do know, and testify of what they have seen from the depths of their souls, they speak with what we call eloquence; for the meaning of the word eloquence is—speaking out of, speaking from the soul. Thus David spake of what he knew, what he had verified all his life long, and this rendered him truly eloquent. As "truth is stranger than fiction," so the truth that David spake is more sweet than even fancy could have sported with; and it hath more beauty than even the dream of the enthusiast could have pictured. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." How naturally it seems to strike on the ear as uttered by David, who had himself been a shepherd boy! He remembers how he had led his flock by the waters of Jordan in the warm summer, how he had made them lie down in shady nooks by the side of the river; how on sultry days he had led them on the high hills that they might feel the cool air; and how when the winter set in he had led them into the valleys that they might be hidden from the stormy blast; well could he remember the

tender care with which he protected the lambs, and carried them; and how he had tended the wounded of the flock. And now, appropriating to himself the familiar figure of a sheep, he says, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." I will try to preach experimentally of this matter to-night, and I wonder how many of you will be able to follow the Psalmist with me while I attempt to do so?

First of all, THERE ARE SOME PRELIMINARIES before a man can say this; it is absolutely necessary he should feel himself to be like a sheep by nature; for he can not know that God is his shepherd, unless he feels in himself that he has the nature of a sheep. Secondly, THERE IS A SWEET ASSURANCE—a man must have had some testimony of Divine care and goodness in the past, otherwise he can not appropriate to himself this verse, "The Lord is my shepherd." And thirdly, THERE IS A HOLY CONFIDENCE. I wonder how many there are here who can place all the future in the hand of God, and can join with the last sentence, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want;" if all the earth does, I shall not want.

I. First, then, we say there is a CERTAIN CONFESSION necessary before a man can join in these words; we must feel that there is something in us which is akin to the sheep; we must acknowledge that in some measure we exactly resemble it, or else we can not call God our shepherd.

Well, I think the first apprehension we shall have, if the Lord has brought us into this condition, is this—*we shall be conscious of our own folly; we shall feel how unwise we always are.* A sheep is one of the most unwise of creatures. It will go anywhere except in the right direction; it will leave a fat pasture to wander into a barren one; it will find out many ways but not the right way; it would wander through a wood, and find its way through ravines into the wolf's jaws, but never by its wariness turn away from the wolf; it could wander near his den, but it would not instinctively turn aside from the place of danger; it knoweth how to go astray, but it knoweth not how to come home again. The sheep is foolish. Left to itself, it would not know in what pasture to feed in summer, or whither to retire in winter.

Have we ever been brought to feel that in matters of providence, as well as in things of grace, we are truly and entirely foolish? Methinks, no man can trust providence till he distrusts himself; and none can say, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," until he has given up every idle notion that he can control himself, or manage his own interests. Alas! we are most of us wise above that which is written, and we are too vain to acknowledge the wisdom of God. In our self-esteem we fancy our reason can rule our purposes, and we never doubt our own power to accomplish our own intentions, and then, by a little manœuvring, we think to extricate ourselves from the difficulty. Could we steer in such a direction as we have planned, we entertain not a doubt but we shall avoid at once the Scylla and the Charybdis, and have fair sailing all our life long. And too often, alas! we touch the forbidden thing, under the vain notion that the end will justify the means if we should be able entirely to clear our way. O beloved! surely it wants but little teaching in the school of grace to make out that we ourselves are fools. True wisdom is sure to set folly in a strong light. I have heard of a young man who went to college; and when he had been there one year, his parent said to him, "What do you know? Do you know more than when you went?" "Oh! yes," said he, "I do." Then he went the second year, and was asked the same question—"Do you know more than when you went?" "Oh! no," said he, "I know a great deal less." "Well," said the father, "you are getting on." Then he went the third year, and was asked the same question—"What do you know now?" "Oh!" said he, "I don't think I know anything." "That is right," said the father; "you have now learnt to profit, since you say you know nothing." He who is convinced that he knows nothing of himself as he ought to know, gives up steering his ship, and lets God put his hand on the rudder. He lays aside his own wisdom, and cries, "O God! my little wisdom is cast at thy feet; my little judgment is given to thee. Such as it is, I surrender it; I am prepared to renounce it, for it hath caused me many an ill, and many a tear of regret, that I should have followed my own devices, but henceforth I

will delight in thy statutes. 'As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden look unto the hand of her mistress, even so shall mine eyes wait upon the Lord my God.' I will not trust in horses, nor in chariots; but the name of the God of Jacob shall be my refuge. Too long, alas! have I sought my own pleasure, and labored to do everything for my own gratification. Now would I ask, O Lord, thy help, that I may seek first the kingdom of God, and his glory, and leave all the rest to thee." Do you, O my friends, feel persuaded that you are foolish? Have you been brought to confess the sheepishness of your nature? Or are you flattering your hearts with the fond conceit that you are wise? If so, you are fools. But if brought to see yourselves like Agur when he said, "I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man," then even Solomon might pronounce thee wise. And if thou art thus brought to confess, "I am a silly sheep," I hope thou wilt be able to say, "The Lord is my shepherd, I can not have any other, I want none other: he is enough for me."

Again, a sheep is not only a *foolish* but a *dependent* creature. The sheep, at least in its domesticated state, as we know it, must ever be dependent. If we should take a horse, we might turn him loose upon the prairie, and there he should find sufficient scope for his powers; and, years after, we might see him in no worse condition than that in which we left him. Even the ox might thus be treated and still be able to provide for itself. But as for the silly sheep, set it alone in the wilderness, let it pursue its own course unheeded, and what would be its fate? Presently, if it did not wander into places where it would be starved, it would ultimately come to ruin, for assuredly some wild beast would lay hold upon it, and it hath no means of defence for itself. Beloved, have we been brought to feel that we have of ourselves no means of subsistence, and no power of defence against our foes? Do we perceive the necessity for our dependence upon God? If so, then we have learnt another part of the great lesson, that the Lord is our shepherd. Some of us have yet this lesson to learn. Fain would we cater for ourselves and carve for our-

selves; but, as the good old Puritan says, "No child of God ever carves for himself without cutting his fingers." We sometimes fancy that we can do a little. Ay, ay! but we shall have that conceit taken from us very soon. If we indeed be God's people, he will bring us to depend absolutely upon him, day by day. He will make us pray that prayer, "Give us *this* day our daily bread;" that we may make this acknowledgment that he openeth his hand and giveth us our meat in due season. Sweet is the meal that we eat, as it were, out of his hand. Yet some will rebel against this dependence as very humiliating. Men like to vaunt their independence. Nothing is more respectable in their eyes than to live in independent circumstances. But it is no use for us to talk of being independent; we never can be. I remember a dear Christian man who prayed very sweetly on each Sunday morning at a certain prayer-meeting that I once attended—"O Lord, we are *independent* creatures upon thee." Except in such a sense as that, I never knew any independence worth having. Of course he put the syllable "*in*" too much. He meant "we are *de*pendent creatures," and "we are dependent creatures upon thee." So we must be. We cannot be independent even of one another, and certainly we are not independent of God: for, when we have health and strength we are dependent upon him for their continuance; and if we have them not, we are dependent on him to restore them to us. In all matters whatsoever it is sweet, it is blessed, to see the tokens of his watchful care. If I had a thing of which I could say, "God has not given me this," I hope, by Divine grace, I should turn it out of doors. Food, raiment, health, breath, strength, every thing, cometh from him, and we are constantly dependent upon him. As Huntingdon used to say, "My God gives me a hand-basket portion. He does not give me an abundance at once; but he gives it basket by basket, and I live from hand to mouth." Or, as old Hardy once said, "I am a gentleman commoner on the bounty of God; I live day by day upon morning commons and evening commons. And thus I am dependent upon him, independent of the world, but dependent upon God." The sheep is a dependent thing, always

needing some help; and so is the Christian; and he realizes the blessedness of his dependence when he can say, in the words of my text, "The Lord is my shepherd."

These are the two principal points upon which we view this with regard to providence. I might wander from what I wished to be the subject of this evening; and I might be doing good if I were to show you some other points of comparison between the Christian and the sheep. O beloved! there are some of you here present who know yourselves to be sheep by reason of your frequent wanderings. How often have we made this confession, "We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep," and we do feel it this night, bitterly rueing the waywardness of our hearts. But it is well to be the sheep of God's pasture, even if we have been wandering sheep. We do not read of wandering dogs, because dogs are naturally wild, while sheep are always accounted to be some one's property. The straying sheep has an owner, and however far it may stray from the fold, it ceases not to belong to that owner. I believe that God will yet bring back into the fold every one of his own sheep, and they shall all be saved. It is something to feel our wanderings, for if we feel ourselves to be lost, we shall certainly be saved; if we feel ourselves to have wandered, we shall certainly be brought back.

Again, we are just like sheep by reason of the perverseness of our wills. People talk about free-will Christians, and tell us of persons being saved and coming to God of their own free will. It is a very curious thing, but though I have heard a great many free-will sermons, I never heard any free-will prayers. I have heard Arminianism in preaching and talking, but I have never heard any Arminian devotion. In fact, I do not think there can be any prayer of the sort. It is a style that does not suit prayer. The theory may look very nice in argument, and sound very proper in discourse, though we somewhat differ from it; but for practical purposes it is useless. The language will not suit in prayer, and this alone would be sufficient reason to condemn it. If a man can not pray in the spirit of his own convictions, it shows they are a

delusion from beginning to end, for if they were true he could pray in that language as well as in any other. Blessed be God! the doctrines of grace are as good to pray with as to preach with. We do not find ourselves out of order in any act of worship when once we have the old fundamental doctrines of the blessed gospel of grace. Persons talk about free-will Christians coming back to Jesus of themselves. I intend to believe them when they find me a free-will sheep that has come back of itself; when they have discovered some sheep after it has gone from its fold stand bleating at its master's door to be taken in again. You will not find such a thing, and you will not find a free-will Christian just yet, for they will all confess if you thoroughly probe the matter, that it was grace, grace alone that restored their souls—

"Grace taught our souls to pray,
And made our eyes o'erflow;
'Tis grace that keeps us to this day,
And will not let us go."

Not to pause longer on the threshold, let us proceed to the text itself. The two things which I have explained to you we must feel before we can realize the pith of the matter are these—our own folly and our entire dependence upon the providence of God.

II. The next thing is, the ASSURANCE—how are we able to see that the Lord is our shepherd? It is very easy to say the Lord is *a* shepherd; but how shall we appropriate the blessedness to ourselves—the Lord is *our* shepherd? I answer that he hath had certain dealings with our souls in the past which have taught us that he is our shepherd. If every man and every woman in this assembly to-night should rise up and say, "The Lord is my shepherd," I feel convinced it would be in many instances the solemn utterance of an untruth; for there are, it is to be feared, many here who have not God for their shepherd. He is their guide, it is true, in some sense, because he overrules all the hearts and controls all the affairs of the children of men; but they are not the people of his pasture, they are not the sheep of his hand;

they do not believe, therefore they are not of his fold. And if some of you should say that you are, your own conscience would belie you. How, then, does a man come to know that the Lord is his Shepherd?

He knows it, *first*, because Jesus Christ has brought him back from his wanderings. If there be any one here who after a course of folly and sin has been brought from the mountains of error and the haunts of evil; if there be one here who has been stopped in a mad career of vice, and has been reclaimed by the power of Jehovah Jesus, such a one will know by a happy experience that the Lord is his shepherd. If I once wandered on yon mountain top, and Jesus climbed up and caught me, and put me on his shoulders, and carried me home, I can not and dare not doubt that he is my shepherd. If I had belonged to some other sheep-owner he would not have sought me. And from the fact that he did seek I learn that he must be my shepherd. Did I think any man convinced me of sin, or that any human power had converted me, I should fear I was that man's sheep and that he was my shepherd. Could I trace my deliverance to the hand of a creature, I should think that some creature might be my shepherd; but, since he who has been reclaimed of God must and will confess that God alone has done it, and will ascribe to his free grace, and to that alone, his deliverance from sin, such a one will feel persuaded that the Lord must be his shepherd, because he brought him, he delivered him, he snatched him out of the jaw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear. Such is the first token of the shepherd's care which we receive at the hand of the Lord.

We know still further, that like a shepherd he has supplied our wants. Some of you, beloved, know of a surety that God is your provider. You have been brought sometimes into such straits that if it had not been for an interposition of Heaven itself you never could have had deliverance. You have sunk so deep down into poverty, and lovers and acquaintance have stood so far aloof from you, that you know there is but one arm which could have fetched you up. You have been reduced perhaps to such straits that all you could do was to pray.

You have wrestled at the throne, and sought for an answer, but it has not come; you have used every effort to extricate yourself, and still darkness has compassed your path. Again and again you have tried, till hope has well nigh vanished from your heart, and then, adding vows to your prayer, you have said in agony, "O God, if thou wilt deliver me this time I will never doubt thee again." Look back on the paths of your pilgrimage. Some of you can count as many Ebenezers as there are milestones from here to York; Ebenezers piled up, with oil poured on the top of them; places where you have said, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped me." Look through the pages of your diary, and you will see time after time, when your perils and exigencies were such as no earthly skill could relieve, and you felt constrained to witness what others among you have never felt—you felt that there is a God, that there is a Providence—"a God who compasseth your path," and "is acquainted with all your ways." You have received deliverance in so marvelous a way, from so unseen a hand, and so unlikely a source, under circumstances, perhaps, so foreign to your wishes, and yet the deliverance has been so perfect, so complete, and wonderful, that you have been obliged to say, "The Lord *is* my shepherd." Yes; *he is*. The sheep, we know, fed day by day in good pasture, may forget its shepherd; but if for a time it is taken from the pasture, and then brought home again, after having been nearly starved, it says, "Truly, he is my shepherd." If I had always been supplied with bread, without the pinch of anxiety, I might have doubted whether he had given it, and ascribed it to the ordinary course of passing events; but, seeing that "everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need," I own that it is "my God who supplies all my need;" yea, and with gratitude I will write it down for a certainty, "The Lord is my shepherd."

But, beloved, do not be distressed, even though you should not have had these particular trials and deliverances, for there is a way whereby we can tell that the Lord is our shepherd without encountering so many rough and rugged passes, as I will show you presently. I have heard it said by some, that

a man can not be a child of God unless he has gone through a certain set of trials and troubles. I recollect hearing a sermon from these words, "Passing through the valley of Baca, they make it a well." Certainly the preacher did not make his sermon a well, for it was as dry as a stick, and not worth hearing. There was nothing like cheerfulness in it; but a flood of declamation all the way through against hopeful Christians, against people going to heaven who are not always grumbling, and murmuring, and doubting; fumbling for their evidences amid the exercises of their own hearts; ever reading and striving to rival Job and Jeremiah in grief, taking the Lamentations as the fit expression of their own lips, troubling their poor brains, and vexing their poor hearts and smarting, and crying, and wearying themselves with the perpetual habit of complaining against God, saying, "My stroke is heavier than my groaning." Such persons measure themselves by their troubles, and trials, and distresses, and tribulations, and perplexities, and no end of these things that we will not stop to recount. We believe, indeed, that such things will come to a child of God; we think every Christian will be corrected in due measure; we should be the last to deny that God's people are a tried people. They must all pass through the furnace of affliction, and he has chosen them there; but still we believe that religion is a blessed and a happy thing, and we love to sing that verse:—

'The men of grace have found
Heaven begun below;
Celestial fruits on earthly ground,
From faith and hope do grow."

And what though some of my hearers have not yet had to swim through the rivers, though they may not have had to pass through the fiery furnace of providential trial—they have had trials enough, and trials that no heart has known except their own, sufferings which they could not tell to flesh and blood, which have gnawed their very souls and entered into the marrow of their spirits; bitter anguish and aching voids such as those who boast about their trials never felt, such as

mere babbling troublers did never know, deep rushings of the stream of woe with which little bubbling narrow brooks could never compare. Such persons fear to murmur, they can not tell their sufferings, because they think it would be showing some want of trust in God; they keep their trials to themselves, and only tell them into that ear which heareth and hath no lips to babble afterward. "But," you say, "how can you tell the Lord is your shepherd if you have not been tried in any of those great deeps?" We know that he is, because he has fed us day by day in good pasture. And if he has not suffered us to wander so far away as others, we can lift up our eyes and say, "Lord, thou art my shepherd; I can as fully prove that thou art my shepherd by thy keeping me in the grassy field, as by thy fetching me back when I have wandered; I know thou art as much my shepherd when thou hast supplied my wants day by day as if thou hadst suffered me to go into poverty and given me bitterness; I know thou art as much my shepherd when granting me a continual stream of mercy, as if that stream had stopped for a moment and then began again." Persons say if they have had an accident, and been nearly killed, or have narrowly escaped, "What a providence!" Why, it is as much a providence when you have no accident at all. A good man once went to a place to meet his son. Both his son and himself had ridden from some distance. When the son arrived he exclaimed, "O! father, I had such a providence on the road." "Why, what was that?" "My horse stumbled six times, and I was not thrown down and killed." "Dear me!" said his father, "but I have had a providence too." "And what was that?" "Why, my horse never stumbled at all, and that is just as much a providence as if the horse had stumbled six times, and I had not been thrown down." Well, you know it is a great providence when you have lost your property, and God provides for you; but it is quite as much a providence when you have no loss at all, and when you are still able to live above the depths of penury and so God provides for you. I say this to some of you whom God has blessed from your earliest youth, and continually provided for; you, too, can say, "The Lord is my shepherd;"

you can see it stamped on your mercies; though they come daily, they are given you of God; and you will say, by humble faith, the word "*my*" as loud as any one of them. "The Lord is *my* shepherd." Do not get despising the little ones because they have not had so many trials as you have. You great *standard* men, do not get cutting the children of God in pieces because they have not been in such fights as you have. The master leads the sheep where he pleases, and be sure he will lead them rightly; and as long as they can say the word "my," do not trouble yourselves where they learned it—if they can say from their hearts, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

III. Now, we finish up with the HOLY CONFIDENCE of the blessed Psalmist: "I shall not want—I am sure I shall not want." There poor unbelief says, "I am wanting in everything, I am wanting in spirituals, I am wanting in temporals; and I shall want. Ah! such distress as I had a little while ago. You can not tell what it was; it was enough to break one's heart. And it is coming again; I *shall* want." That is very good, unbelief, but you must write your own name at the bottom, and then I will repeat to you this, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." That is what David said, and I think David's faith rather preferable to your unbelief after all. I take your evidence in some matters, but I really would not take it before David's. I would accept your testimony as an honest man in some respects, but I think the words of inspiration are rather preferable to your words of apprehension. When I find it written, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," I would rather take one of David's affirmations than fifty of your negations. Methinks I hear some one saying, "I would bear the want of any temporal good, if I could but obtain spiritual blessings. I am in want this night of more faith, more love, more holiness, more communion with my Saviour." Well, beloved, the Lord is thy shepherd; thou shalt not want even these; if thou askest of him, he will give them to thee, though it may be by terrible things in righteousness that he will save thee. He often answers his people in an unexpected manner; most of God's

answers to our letters come down in black envelopes; yet, mark you, they will come. If you want peace, joy, sanctification, and such like things, they shall be given to you, for God hath promised them. The Lord is your shepherd, you shall not want. I have often thought of the large promise written in the Bible—I do not know where there is a larger one—"No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." "No good thing!" It is a mercy that the word "good" was put in, for if it said, "nothing," we should have been asking for many things that would be bad for us; but it says, "no good thing!" Now, spiritual mercies are good things, and not only good things, but the best things, so that you may well ask for them; for if no good thing will be withholden, much more will none of the best things. Ask, then, Christian, for he is thy shepherd, and thou shalt not want; he will supply thy need; he will give thee whatever thou requirest; ask in faith, nothing doubting, and he shall give thee what thou wilt, according to thy desires. But still there are some who say, "The text applies to temporal matters," and persist in it. Well, then, I will accept this sense—the Lord is your shepherd, you shall not want. "Ah!" cries one, "I was once in affluence, and now I am brought down to penury. I once stood among the mighty and was rich, now I walk among the lowly and am poor." Well, it does not say, "The Lord is your shepherd, and you shall not come down in society;" it does not say, "The Lord is your shepherd, and therefore you shall have five hundred or a thousand pounds a year;" it does not say, "The Lord is your shepherd, and therefore you shall have whatsoever your soul lusteth after." All it says is, "The Lord is your shepherd, and you shall not want." There are different ways of wanting. There are many people whose foolish craving and restless anxiety make them always in want. If you gave them a house to live in, and fed them day by day, they would always be wanting. And after you had just relieved their necessities, they would want still. The fact is, theirs are not real wants, but simply fancied wants. It does not say, "The Lord is my shepherd, therefore I shall not fancy I want;" for, though God might

promise it, it would need his omnipotence to carry it out: for his people often get fancying that they want, when they do not. It is real wants that are referred to. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not really want." There are many things we wish for that we do not want, but there is no promise given that we shall have all we wish for. God hath not said that he would give us anything more than the bread or the water: "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure;" and he has not broken that promise yet, has he? So, lift up thy head, and do not be afraid. Fear not, thy God is with thee; he shall prevent evil from hurting thee; he shall turn darkness into light, and bitter into sweet. All the way he hath led thee, and all the way he shall lead thee; this shall be thy constant joy. He is my shepherd, I shall not really want that which is absolutely necessary. Whatever I really require shall be given by the lavish hand of a tender father. Believer, here is thy jointure, here is thine inheritance, here is thine income, here is thy yearly living: "He is thy shepherd, and thou shalt not want." What is thy income, believer? "Why," you say, "it is different with some and others of us." Well, but a believer's income is still the same. This is it: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." That is my income, and it is yours, poor little one. That is the income of the poorest pauper in the workhouse who hath an interest in the grace of God. The Lord is her shepherd, she shall not want: that is the income of the poor foundling child that has to come to know the Lord in early life, and hath no other friend. The Lord is her shepherd, she shall not want: that is the widow's inheritance. The Lord is her shepherd, she shall not want: that is the orphan's fortune. The Lord is his shepherd, he shall not want: that is the believer's portion, his inheritance, his blessing.

"Well now," some may say, "but what is it worth?" Beloved, if we could now change away this promise for a world of gold, we would not; we had rather live on this promise than live on the finest fortune in creation. We reckon that this is an inheritance that makes us rich indeed! "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Give me ten thousand

pounds, and one reverse of fortune may scatter it all away; but let me have a spiritual hold of this Divine assurance—"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want"—then I am all right—I am set up for life. I can not break with such stock as this in hand. I never can be a bankrupt, for I hold this security—"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Do not give me ready money now; give me a cheque-book, and let me draw what I like. This is what God does with the believer. He does not immediately transfer his inheritance to him, but lets him draw what he needs out of the riches of his fullness in Christ Jesus. The Lord is his shepherd, he shall not want. What a glorious inheritance! Walk up and down it, Christians; lie down upon it, it will do for thy pillow; it will be soft as down for thee to lie upon. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Climb up that creaking staircase to the top of thy house, lie down on thy hard mattrass, wrap thyself round with a blanket, look out for the winter when hard times are coming, and say, "What shall I do?" But, then, just hum over to thyself these words, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." That will be like the hush of a lullaby to your poor soul, and you will soon sink to slumber. Go, thou business man, to thy counting-house again, after this little hour of recreation in God's house, again to cast up those wearisome books. Thou art saying, "How about business? These prices may be my ruin. What shall I do?" When thou hast cast up thine accounts, put this down against all thy fears, and see what a balance it will leave—"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." There is another man. He does not lack anything, but still he feels that some great loss may injure him considerably. Go and write this down in thy cash-book. If thou hast made out thy cash-account truly, put this down: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;" put that down for something better than pounds, shillings and pence, something better than gold and silver. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." "Ah!" says the cold, calculating man, "your promise is not worth having, sir." No; it would not, if it were my promise. But fortunately it is not. It is God's promise. It

is only my promise if God has given it to me. It has nothing to do with you. He that disregards it knows nothing about it, but he who apprehends it says, "Ah! yes! it is true, 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.'" He will find this promise like Chian wine of which the ancients said it was flavored to the lip of him that tasted it. The promise shall taste sweet to thee if thy palate is pure; yet it shall be worth nothing to thee but mere froth if thy taste is not healthy.

But, beloved, we must divide our congregation before we send you away, and remind you that there are some of you to whom this does not belong. Perhaps some of you professors of religion may want this promise badly enough; but it is not yours. The Lord is not your shepherd; you are not the sheep of his pasture, and the flock of his hand. You are not those who have gone astray; you are not sheep, but goats—unclean creatures, not harmless, and undefiled as sheep; but everything that is the very reverse. Oh! it is not only eternal loss, it is not only everlasting injury that you have to regret—it is present loss, it is present injury; the loss of a jointure on earth, the loss of an inheritance below. To lose this promise here on earth,—this were like a temporary hell. To be deprived of such a comfort and promise as this is a terrible privation. Oh! it is enough to make men long for religion if it were only for that sweet placidity and calm of mind which it giveth here below. Well might men wish for this heavenly oil to be cast on the troubled waters of this mortal life, even if they did not anoint their heads therewith, and enter into glory with the joy of their Lord upon their countenance. Beloved, there are some I know here—and your conscience tells you that I mean yourselves—who speak within your own hearts, and the voice now says, "I am none of his sheep." Well then, there is no promise for you that you shall not want; for you there is no help, there is no providence. The promise and the providence are for believers, and not for you. There is no word that all things shall work together for your good; but rather, cursed shalt thou be in thy basket and cursed in thy store, cursed in the field, cursed in thy house, and cursed in thy goings out, and cursed in thy

comings in, for "the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked." It doth not peep in at his window, but it is in his house. Yet God "blesseth the habitation of the righteous." The curse shall follow you until your dying day; and not having him for your shepherd, you shall wander where that hungry wolf the devil shall at last seize upon your soul, and everlasting misery and destruction from the presence of Jehovah must be your inevitable, miserable, and inexpressibly awful doom. May the Lord in mercy deliver you from it! And this is the way of salvation: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." "He that believeth and is baptized"—we omit nothing that God has said. "He that believeth and is baptized"—not he that is baptized and believeth (which were to reverse God's order). "He that believeth and is baptized" —not he that is baptized without believing, but the two joined together. He that believeth with his heart and is baptized, confessing with his mouth—"he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Do you neglect one part of it? It is at your peril, sir! "He that believeth and is baptized," says God. If any of you have neglected one portion of it, if you have believed and have not been baptized, God shall save you. Still this promise saith not so. "He that believeth and is baptized;" it says the two together; and "what God hath joined together let no man put asunder;" what he hath ordered let no man disarrange. "He that believes"—that is, he that trusts in Jesus; he that relies upon his blood, his merits, and his righteousness—"and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."

# SERMON VI.

## THE GRACIOUS LIPS OF JESUS.

"Grace is poured into thy lips."—PSALM, xlv. 2.

IT is marvellous what a never-ending theme there is in the name and person of our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The poets of Scripture never mention his person but they fall into rhapsodies at once; they never sing of his name or of his glories but at once they seem to be so enchanted by the spirit of poetry, that they soar up with ecstasies of joy, and their love scarcely knows how to find language to express itself. Love sometimes overleapeth language among sensitive men; and so it does more palpably in sacred Scripture. Take, for instance, the Canticles. There love hath strained language to the uttermost, in order to embody its vehement passion: yea, so strained it, that some of us *not so* filled with love to God can scarcely appreciate its *glowing* utterance. Here, too, you see our Psalmist no sooner begins to meditate on the person of the Messiah, with harp in hand, than he cries, "My heart bubbleth up with a good matter; I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips." We shall have no time for preface this morning, but we must proceed at once to the discussion of our text.

Grace is poured into the lips of Christ. Let us consider, First, *the plenitude of this grace;* Secondly, *the nature of this grace;* and Thirdly, endeavor to show you *in what offices Jesus Christ proves that "grace is poured into his lips."*

I. We commence with the word "POURED," as suggesting THE PLENITUDE OF "GRACE." "Grace is poured into thy lips." Others among the children of men have had "grace;"

mighty poets have spoken gracious words; and prophets of old have uttered wondrous sayings, which were divinely inspired; so that it might be said, their doctrine "dropped" as the rain, and that their speech "distilled" like the dew. Such imagery, however, is too faint to describe our Lord Jesus. Not merely as the dew did he speak, nor did his voice simply drop as the small rain: it was "POURED" from his lips. Whenever he spoke, a copious stream of gracious words flowed from him like a very cataract of eloquence. Jesus Christ had not a little grace, but it was "poured into" him; not a phial of oil on his head, but he had a cruse and a horn of oil emptied upon him. "Grace was poured into his lips." I would remark that Calvin translates this: "Grace is shed from thy lips." Not only did God give to his Son grace on his lips, but the Son, whenever he speaks, whether he addresses the people in doctrine and exhortation, or whether he pleads with his Father on their behalf—whenever his lips are open to speak to God for men, or from God to men, he always has "grace shed from his lips." And when I turn to the Septuagint translation of this passage, I find that it has the idea of the very exhaustion of grace: "Grace is poured from thy lips," as though emptied out till there is none left. Jesus Christ had grace exhausted in his person. In him "dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." All grace was given to him; the very exhaustion of the inexhaustible store: as much as to say that God could give no more, and that Jesus Christ himself could not receive or possess more grace. It was all poured into his person; and when he speaks, he seems to exhaust grace itself. Imagination's utmost stretch cannot conceive of anything more gracious; and the contemplation of the most devoted Christian cannot think of any words more majestic in goodness, more tender in sympathy, more full of honey, and more luscious in their sweetness, than the gracious words that proceeded out of the lips of Jesus Christ. "Grace is poured into his lips." Ah! Christian, you may have some grace on your lips, but you have not got it "poured" into them; you may have some grace in your heart, but it is dropped there like small rain

from heaven—you have not got it "poured" there; you may be ever so full of grace, but Christ is more full than you are; and when you are ever so reduced in grace, it is a consolation that with him is plenteous grace—plenty that knows no lack, for "grace is poured into his lips." Be not afraid to go to him in every time of need, nor think he will fail to comfort you; his comforts are not like water spilled on the earth, that cannot be gathered up; they will yield perpetual streams, for "grace is poured into his lips." He has no stinted supply, no short allowance to give you; but ask what you will, you shall have as much as your faith can desire, and your heart can hold, for "grace is poured into his lips" with the richest plenitude.

II. Not to expatiate further on this, let us pass to the second thought—THE KIND OF GRACE THAT JESUS CHRIST HAS, WHICH IS THUS POURED INTO HIS LIPS, AND SHED FORTH FROM HIS LIPS. It is important to remark that Jesus Christ has what none of the sons of men ever had—he has *inherent grace*. Adam, when he was created of God, had some inherent grace, which God gave to him; yet not so much of God's grace as to preserve the uprightness of his charater. He had but the grace of purity, as it could be displayed in the innocence of his intelligent nature. There must have been much grace in the constitution of the man, seeing he was originally created in the likeness of God; yet there could not have been perfect grace in him, for he did not keep his first estate. But Jesus Christ had all the grace that Adam had, and all the grace that any innocent man could have had, in the most sublime perfection; and that grace was born in him. You and I have none of that; it is all passed away and gone. As for inherent grace, where is it to be discovered? We have heard men say that children are not born in sin, nor shapen in iniquity, but that they have inherent grace; albeit we have not yet met with the man who has found so wonderful a child. At any rate, the children have been mightily spoiled in growing to maturity, for they have not given much proof of grace afterwards. No, beloved; we are naturally graceless—a seed of evil-doers; all our inherent grace was spoiled by Adam.

However full the pitcher might have been originally, it has been emptied out by the fall. Adam broke the earthen vessel, and spilt every drop of its contents, and we have none left. Jesus was born, not a sinful man, but begotten of the Holy Ghost, made of a pure virgin. In the conception of "that holy thing," there was no hereditary sin; his body was without taint or pollution, and his soul was impeccable. It was not possible he should sin, for in him there was no sin: he had inherent grace in himself.

And next, *he had grace which he derived from the constitution of his person, being God as well as man.* The manhood of Christ derived grace from the Godhead of Christ. I do not doubt but the two natures, though the distinction was not superseded, were so united in such wonderful union, that what the man did the God confirmed, and what the God willed, that the man did. Nor did the man Christ Jesus ever act without the God Christ Jesus. Nor did he ever speak without the God—the God within him—the God whom he *is* as truly as he is man. We speak but as men, save when the Spirit of God speaks through us. The greatest and mightiest of all prophets have but spoken as men inspired; but Jesus spoke as man and God conjoined. "Grace" this unutterably Divine grace—his own grace of Godhead, "was poured into his lips," and "shed forth from his lips."

But more. I conceive that the Lord Jesus Christ, when he spoke, had also, as well as his ministers, *the assistance of God the Holy Spirit.* In fact, we are told that God gave the Spirit unto him without measure. It is a most remarkable fact, and I believe it is put in Scripture on purpose to make us honor the Holy Spirit, that Jesus Christ as a preacher—so far as we can judge from the Word of God—was not so successful in conversion as some of his followers have been. Now, if you turn over the life of Paul, you will notice how many thousands were brought through his preaching to know the Lord; and if you read the account of Peter's sermon, you will see that three thousand were converted in one day. You never hear of such an instance in the life of Christ. When he died, he left but three or four hundred disciples behind him; or if

there were others, his success was not so manifest as that of many of his disciples. The reason was this, says Jesus: I will honor the Holy Spirit; I will let the world know that it is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. And though I speak as never man spake, and have more eloquence than mortal ever again can attain, yet I will in my sovereignty restrain myself from the exercise of that Spirit. The people's eyes shall be dull, and they shall slumber, their hearts shall wax fat, and they shall be gross. Then, in after years, I will speak more through an humble fisherman than I did myself. I will honor more the weakest instrument than I have done even my own self as a preacher. Ah! is it wonderful how God doth magnify the ministry of the Holy Ghost. We are so apt to forget his essential offices in the covenant, that God, as it were, says, Here is my own Son; although he preaches, I will show you that the preacher must rest on the Holy Spirit, and I will give him a congregation who shall take him to the brow of the hill to cast him down headlong; while Paul, who is but a stammerer, I will clothe with such majesty, that wherever he goes his testimony shall be with the power of the Spirit to abase the gods of the heathens, and make their idols totter to the dust. But yet Jesus Christ has the Spirit without measure, for every sentence of his was instinct with energy Divine. "The words," said Jesus, "that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are life." Thus you see his words are not merely *of* the Spirit, but they *are* Spirit. It seems to me that, *as* "he that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father," so he that hath heard Christ hath heard the Holy Ghost. Still, the fruits of his ministry, like the homage due to his person, lay beyond the brief term of his sojourn on earth. He was rejected of his generation, but afterward "declared to be the Son of God, according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead." In like manner his words, though not seemingly productive at the time, were so full of the Spirit's quickening power, that they were afterwards the means of conversion to millions of millions, beyond the capacity of mortals to count. All conversions under Peter, Paul, and the other apostles, were by Christ Jesus. The

words that he spake in secret, they published far and wide. All conversions *now* are in his name, and by his word. The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy. If an apostle spake of himself, it fell to the ground, but what their Master told them was rendered successful. Jesus Christ has the Spirit without measure; and herein is another kind of grace, of which it can be said, "Grace is poured into thy lips."

III. We have very hastily passed over these two divisions, that we may dilate on the third. We are now to consider THE VARIOUS OFFICES IN WHICH WE MAY DISCERN "GRACE" AS BEING "POURED INTO THE LIPS" OF CHRIST, AND SHED AGAIN FROM HIS LIPS.

First, let us regard our Saviour as *the eternal Surety of the covenant*, and we shall see that "grace was poured into his lips." When God the Father originally made the covenant, it stood somewhat in this form: "My Son, thou desirest, and I also agree with thee, to save a number, that no man can number, whom I have elected in thee. But in order to their salvation, that I may be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly, it is necessary that some one should be their representative, to stand responsible for their obedience to my laws and their substitute to suffer whatever penalties they incur. If thou, my Son, wilt stipulate to bear their punishment, and endure the penalty of their crimes, I on my part will stipulate that thou shalt see thy seed, shalt prolong thy days, and that the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in thy hands. If thou to-day art prepared to promise that thou wilt bear the exact punishment of all the people whom thou wouldst save, I on my part am prepared to swear by myself, because I can swear by no greater, that all for whom thou shalt atone shall infallibly be delivered from death and hell, and that all for whom thou bearest the punishment shall hence go free, nor shall my wrath rise against them, however great may be their sins." Jesus spake the word, and he said, "My Father! lo, I come In the volume of the Book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God." Now, that was spoken in eternity, far back as faith on eagle wings can soar, and such grace was poured into the lips of Christ when he made that simple decla-

ration, that tens of thousands of saints entered heaven, simply on the ground of his solemn pledge. Long before our Saviour did come into the world and pay the penalty, God the Father rested on the words of Jesus, for "he sware to his own heart and changed not." Such grace truly was there shed from the lips of Jesus, that from the days of Adam, when one transgression involved the race in ruin, down to the times when the second Adam made reconciliation for iniquity, the saints all entered heaven upon the faith of Christ's promise alone. Not one drop of blood had been shed, not one agony suffered, the contract was not performed, the stipulation not yet fulfilled; but the Surety's oath was quite enough; in the Father's ears there needed no other confirmation. His heart was satisfied. Yea, more; in that self-same moment, when Jesus spake that word in his Father's ear, all the saints were in him justified and rendered complete; their salvation was secure. As soon as ever Jesus Christ said, "My Father, I will pay the penalty, they shall have my righteousness, and I will have their sin," their acceptance was an eternal fact.

"In union with the Lamb,
From condemnation free,
The saints of God forever were
And shall for ever be."

Oh! was not grace poured into those lips! that one single promise could redeem all the people of God, and carry thousands to heaven, even without a single performance—because God the Father could so rely on him! He would never go back from his agreement, nor ever turn aside from his covenant. This is the first aspect in which we behold grace shed forth from Christ's lips.

Secondly, "Grace is poured into his lips" *as the greatest of all prophets and teachers.* The law was given by Moses, and there was some grace on his lips; for Moses, even when he preached the law, preached the gospel, privileged as he was to look steadfastly to the end of that which is abolished. When he taught the offering of the Lamb, the bullock, and the turtle-dove, there was gospel couched in the law itself, in the

law of Levitical ceremonies. But Moses had but little grace. The beams that shone on the face of Moses were not the beams of grace, they were not "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;" they were the glory of justice, but not the glory of grace. And when other prophets rose at different periods of the first dispensation of the law, they each had some measure of grace. Whether we consider the heroic Elijah, or the plaintive Jeremiah, or Isaiah, that seraphic seer, who spoke more of Christ than all the rest —let us turn to any one of the prophets and we find that each and all had some grace in their lips; what they preached was gracious doctrine, and well worthy to be received; but who ever taught such doctrines as those of Jesus? Where among the writings of the prophets and sages of antiquity, can we find such words as those which Jesus uttered? Who ever taught the people that they should love all men, that God made of one flesh all nations that dwelt upon the face of the earth? Who ever taught the people before Him that the poor were to have the gospel, while God would bring down the mighty from their seats, and would exalt the humble and the meek? Who taught such wondrous doctrines as those which you will find in all his sermons? Who could have been so great a teacher? Who could so blessedly have prophesied to his people but Jesus Christ himself? My soul, contemplate Jesus as the only rabbi of the Church; view him as the only Lord and Master; take thy doctrines and articles of faith from his lips, and his lips alone; study his word and make that alone thy guide; interpret all the rest by his light. When thou hast done so, thou wilt say, "O prophet of my salvation, thou teacher of Israel! verily grace is poured into thy lips. No books afford me such instruction as thine, no ministers address me in such words as my Shepherd speaks. No learning hath in it such depths of wisdom as the wisdom of Christ. "More to be desired are his words than gold; yea, than much fine gold." "Grace was poured into his lips" as the greatest of all prophets.

Thirdly, Christ had grace poured into his lips *as the most eloquent of all preachers.* One of the joys I anticipate in

heaven is to hear Christ speak to his people. I conceive that there was a majesty about Jesus Christ when he spake on earth—such a majesty as not Demosthenes, Cicero, nor Pericles,—not all the orators of ancient or modern times could ever approach. He had a voice, I suppose, more sweet than even the songs which came from the harps of angels. He had an eye expressive of sympathy with those whom he addressed. He had a heart which animated every feature of his countenance. His was pathos which could break the stony heart; his was sublimity which could elevate the sensual mind; each word of his was a pearl, each sentence was of pure gold. "Never man spake like this man." No poet in his most rapt ecstacy could have grasped such conceptions as those the Saviour delivered to his hearers; and when, stooping from his flights, he condescends to speak in plain and simple words to his fellows, there is naked, ungarnished simplicity in the familiar discourse of Christ to which man can not in the least approach. Jesus Christ was the greatest and the plainest of all preachers. We could put aside every other in comparison with him. We have known men who could curb the restless multitude, and hold them spell-bound. Some of us have listened to some mighty man of God who chained our ears, held us fast, and constrained our attention all the while he spoke. Justice, sin, righteousness, and judgment to come have absorbed us while they enlisted our sympathies. But had you heard the Saviour, you would have heard more wondrous things than any man else could have spoken. Methinks if the wild winds could have heard him, they would have ceased their blustering; if the waves could have listened to him, they would have hushed their tumult, and the rough back of ocean would have been smoothed; if the stars could have heard him, they would have stopped their hurried march; if the sun and moon had heard Him whose voice is more potent than that of Joshua, they would have stood still: if creation could have heard him, then charmed, it would have stopped its ceaseless motions, and the wheels of the universe would have stood still, that all ears might listen, that all hearts might beat, and that all eyes might glisten, and that so souls might be elevated,

while Jesus Christ spoke. It was fabled of Hercules, that he had golden chains in his mouth with which he chained the ears of men; it is true of Jesus that he had golden chains in his mouth, that chained men's ears and hearts too. He had no need to ask attention, for "grace was poured into his lips." Happy day! happy day! when I shall sit down at the feet of Jesus Christ and hear him preach. O beloved! what we shall think of our poor preaching I can not tell. It is a mercy that Jesus Christ does not preach here now, for after hearing him, none of us would preach again, so ashamed should we be of ourselves. Sometimes when we try to preach, and afterward hear a more able minister, we feel so outdone that our preaching seems nothing,—we hardly dare try again. It is a mercy there is a veil between us and Christ. We can not hear him preach, or else we should all vacate our pulpits. But in heaven I hope to sit enchanted at his feet; and if he will speak a million years, I would ask him to speak yet another million. And if he will still pursue, e'en then for the sweet redundance of that grace which is poured into his lips, my raptured soul would sit and love and smile itself away in ecstacies of joy to hear my Saviour speak. "Grace was poured into his lips" as the most eloquent of preachers.

Fourthly, "Grace was poured into the lips" of Christ *as the faithful Promiser.* I look upon all the promises of God's word as being the promises of Jesus as well as the promises of the Father and of the Holy Ghost. Every word that is spoken here to the Christian is spoken by Jesus Christ. All the promises, we are told, are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God; and as the promises are all made IN him, so they are all spoken *by* him. Now, will you not concur with me when I say, that verily grace is poured into his lips as the faithful Promiser? We have sometimes read his promises, we have heard them with our ears, and oh! what grace there is in them! Take, for instance, that great honeycomb promise, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Turn to another: "When thou passest through the

rivers I will be with thee: the floods shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel: I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Listen to such sweet words as these: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." "Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him." Beloved, you do not need that I tell you how beautiful these things are. The best way to preach of the faithful Promiser is to tell you some of the promises. I will not tell you what gold and silver there are in Christ's cabinet; I will break the door open, and let you look at some of the treasures for yourselves. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee." "Even to old age I am with thee, and even to hoar hairs will I carry thee." "He shall deliver thee in six troubles, yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee." "He shall save thee from the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and from the destruction that wasteth at noonday."

"He that hath made his refuge God
Shall find a most secure abode;
Shall walk all day beneath his shade,
And there at night shall rest his head."

"All that my Father hath given me shall come to me." "Having loved his own, he loveth them unto the end." "All his saints are in thy hand;" "No man shall pluck them out of my Father's hand." And then there is that great master-promise—"Whosoever believeth on the Son of God shall be saved." Is he not indeed full of grace, as the faithful Promiser? You who have been drinking from he wells of promise well

know his faithfulness and the grace therein. Poor souls! ye have come sick and weary oftentimes to this well, and your strength has been renewed till you were like giants refreshed with new wine. Your spirits have been depressed, and your souls have been melancholy; but when you have come here, you have tasted that wine which maketh glad the heart of man. O! did ever man speak like this man, when he speaks as the faithful Promiser? "Grace is poured into his lips."

Fifthly, "Grace is poured into his lips," *as the wooer and the winner of his people's hearts.* O beloved, Christ hath hard work to win his people's love! He sendeth out his messengers, but the messengers can not compel the people of God to love Jesus. He prepares his feast, the fatlings are killed, and those that are bidden will not come unless he says to his messengers, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." But what a hard matter it is to bring poor souls to be in love with Jesus! In vain does the minister dilate upon his charms; in vain does he try to paint his features as well as he can. We are poor daubers, and we mar the beauty which we attempt to portray. Poor sinners say, "Is that Jesus? there is no beauty that we should desire him." They turn away and hide as it were their faces from him. With tears streaming from our eyes, we "seek to find out acceptable words," and we use the best language our hearts can dictate, but we can not win your souls. Sometimes we address you with rough words that we have borrowed from some ancient Boanerges; at other times, with smooth words such as a Chrysostom might approve, and they are alike in vain: the Lord is not there. But oh! when Jesus pleads his own cause, how sweetly does he plead it! Have you never watched the heart when Jesus Christ began to woo it—when he opens the ear and says, "Poor soul! I love thee, and because I love thee I will tell thee wha thou art. Thou art cast out into the open field; thou ar lying in thy blood; thou art dead in trespasses and sins. Yet I love thee. Wilt thou love me?" "Nay," saith the heart, "I will not." "But," saith Jesus, "my love is deep as hell; it is insatiable as the grave; . will be thine, and thou

shalt be mine." And have you noted how soon the soul begins to yield and the hard rock begins to flow like Niobe's tears, till at length the heart says, "O Jesus! love thee? Yes I do, because thou didst first love me." Why is it that some here have not given their hearts to Jesus? It is because perhaps Jesus has not revealed himself to them in person. But when he does, you can not deny him! I challenge any man to hold his heart back when Jesus comes for it: when he displays himself, when he takes the veil off our eyes and lets us look at his lovely face, shows us his wounded hands and his bleeding side, methinks there is no heart but must be drawn forth to him. Ah! Christian, do you not remember the hour when he pleaded with you? He knocked at the door, and you would not let him in; but your beloved put his hand at the hole of the door, and your bowels were moved toward him, and how sweetly did he tell you your sinnership, and with the next word made known your redemption; then told you of your death, and with the next word made you alive; then told you that you were powerless, and with the next word made you strong; then told you of your unbelief, and with the next sentence gave you faith. O! is he not filled with grace as he wins the hearts and affections of his people?

Sixthly, Jesus Christ hath his lips filled with grace, *as the great consolation of Israel, the comfort of all his people.* There is no comfort except that which cometh from the Lord Jesus. At no brook can ye slake the thirst of the soul, but at that stream of grace which floweth from Christ, and, never can run dry. Let us rehearse his mighty acts; let us go back our lifelong and see the various Ebenezers we have raised to his sovereign grace and mercy. Dost thou not remember how he appeared to thee in the solitude of the wilderness and said, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love?" Dost thou not remember, when, torn with the thorns and briars of this world, thou wast despairing and ready to die, how he came and touched thee and said, "Live?"—when he bid thee turn thine eye upward, and thou couldst then say, "Since Jesus is mine, I will fear nothing?" O ye who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, go ye to the banqueting house again, where

the Saviour comforted you with flagons, and fed you with apples; where he gave you the sweet fruits of the kingdom, and took of the clusters of Eschol and squeezed them into your mouth. Do you not remember when he gave you something better than angels' food at the Lord's table, or how he manifested himself to you in the use of the means while you were waiting upon him? And will you not say, "O Jesus! verily grace was poured into thy lips?" Desponding soul, if Jesus speaks to thee to-day, thou wilt not be desponding any longer. There is such a potency in the word "Jesus," that methinks it ought to be sung in all hospitals to charm away diseases; at least, in every lazar-house for souls. Wherever there are diseased hearts and troubled spirits, I would always go and sing, "Jesus!" There is no medicine able to heal melancholy like the body and blood of Jesus. When he draws near to comfort his people, midnight becomes noon, the thickest darkness becomes a blaze of meridian splendor; for "grace is poured into his lips."

Seventhly, Grace is poured into Christ's lips *as the great Intercessor for his people before the throne.* Before Jesus ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, as Toplady says, "with prayers and groans he offered up his humble suit below;" but now Jesus Christ has gone up on high, "with authority he pleads before his Father." It must have been wonderful to hear the prayer of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, and especially to hear that sentence where he prayed for his people, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am;" but oh, if we might see our blessed Lord this morning pleading in heaven! He stands before his Father's throne, points to his breast, and shows his bleeding hands. When our prayers rise to heaven, they always ask to be introduced by Jesus. They are broken prayers, but Jesus knows how to mend them. There are things in them that should not be—he corrects them, and so he takes an emended edition of our prayers, and says, "My Father! another petition I have come to lay before thee." Says the Father, "Who is it from?" "From one of my people." And should the Father hesitate a moment, Jesus

Christ says: "Father, I will—it must be done. Look here! here is the price!" And he holds up his hands, and shows his side; and then the Father says: "My Son! it shall be done. Whatsoever thou askest in prayer, for thy sake it shall be bestowed." Do you see yon poor man? his name is Peter. At no great distance is Satan, who wants to destroy his soul. He has got a large sieve, in which he desires to sift Peter. Can you imagine Satan presenting himself before the Lord, as in days of yore? He says, "O Lord, let me have Peter in my sieve that I may sift him." Down goes Jesus before the throne, and says: "My Father! I beseech thee let not this grain of wheat fall to the ground." Now Satan goes and catches Peter, and begins to sift him up and down. When Peter goes up the first time, he is a little frightened; the second time he says, "Man, I know not what thou sayest;" the third time he says, "I know not the Man;" and at length he begins to curse and swear. How terrible that sieve! But Christ looks at him, and out goes Peter: the prayer of Jesus availed for him—the look of Jesus prevailed with him: "he went out and wept bitterly," and his soul was saved. Oh! the mighty power of intercession! I do not think our prayers would ever be heard in heaven if it were not for Jesus Christ. He is the great Mediator by whom our prayers must be presented.

Eighthly, Jesus Christ has grace poured into his lips *as the Counsellor for his people.* You may have seen a special pleader rise with a brief in his hand: he shows the case against the prisoner to be a very bad one. Then witnesses are called. Afterwards another advocate gets up to plead the prisoner's cause—to rebut, if possible, the accusation, or to set forth extenuating circumstances in mitigation of punishment. Now, when we stand before the judgment bar of God, Satan will rise up—that old accuser of the brethren, and will gather together the evidences of our guilt, and the reasons why we must be condemned. Methinks I hear him say that we were born in sin and shapen in iniquity, and, therefore, we deserve to be lost; that we have a corrupt nature, that we had the sin of Adam laid to us: and then, with malicious

spleen, he will allege that we transgressed at such and such a time, when we were young; following up our career from youth to manhood, and even down to hoar hairs; clenching all his arguments by an appeal to our unbelief—that though we have professed to believe, we have doubted the promises, and could not, therefore, be children of God. Well might we, as transgressors, tremble when with a bad case the grounds of judgment against us are so maliciously stated. But there stands forth on our behalf "the Wonderful, the Counsellor;" he takes his brief in hand and begins to plead. Hark what he says, and see how all opinion is turned at once! "I confess," says he, "that every word is true that the last accuser has said. My client pleads guilty to every charge; but I have a full pardon signed by God's own hand, purchased by my own blood;" and, stripping himself, he shows his breast, and bares his arm, and says, "These were given to me of my Father before the foundation of the world. I bare their sins in my own body on the tree. My Father justified them; I pardoned them." And then, mounting to the highest point, he reaches the climax of grace as he exclaims, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Canst thou, O God? Hast thou not justified? I cannot, for I died." Then he sits down, in triumph, saying, "Whom he justified, them he also glorified. Nothing shall be able to separate them from the love of God." Shall not each ransomed sinner shout with joy? Oh! righteous Advocate, grace is poured into thy lips!

And now, lastly, Grace is poured into the lips of Jesus *as the great Judge of all at last.* That will be a gracious judgment which Jesus Christ shall dispense; it will be gracious, because it will be at once merciful and just. Sinners, ungodly men and women, now in this house of prayer, ye have never heard the voice of Jesus, and ye have never known what it is to confess that "grace was poured into his lips;" but let me tell you, in a few short years you will be made to confess that "grace is poured into his lips." You will stand there and hear him say to his own people, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foun-

dation of the world." When you hear it you will think within yourselves, "Never did such music break on our ears before. Oh! what precious words." Ay, but you will fall down and ask rocks to hide you, and mountains to cover you, because the words were not spoken to you. You will tremble as one by one the faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ come before him. He will say to one, "Verily, thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." To another he will say, "Thou hast fought a good fight, thou hast kept the faith: receive the crown laid up for thee from the foundation of the world." You will then stand and say, "Oh, what grace was poured into his lips! how graciously he speaks!" And you all the while will feel that he is not speaking to you; you will stand there and know that your turn will never come when he shall speak gracious words to you. Oh! how you will stand fixed to the spot petrified as you listen while you hear those matchless syllables. You laugh at the saints now; you will envy them then. You despise them now; but you will be ready to kiss the dust of their feet if you might but get into heaven. You would not ask to sit on a throne with them; but to lie at their feet would be enough for you, if you might but hear Christ say to you, "Come, ye blessed." But in a moment, instead of gracious words, my hearers—I am not telling you a dream, but a reality –in a moment—O believe me! for God speaketh it—instead of words of grace there shall come words of terror, before the sound of which heaven and earth shall flee away, and there shall be found no blessed place for thee. These be the words: "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels." You would not wish to hear those gracious lips utter such a sentence as that to you. I am sure you are none of you anxious to make your bed in hell, and find your abode in damnation; but, my hearers, I must warn you faithfully. There are some of you who, if you die as you are, will never go to heaven; there are many of you, my regular attendants, and some of you who have just strayed in here this morning, who know, and your heart confesses it, that you are "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of

iniquity." Weeping Christians! weep for them. Let your tears flow in rivers. It were a misery if they were sick, but this is worse, for they are sick unto the second death; it were painful if they were condemned to die by the law, but they are "condemned already." My beloved brethren and sisters, there are some of you now—start not—there are some sitting side by side with you in the pews, who are condemned criminals. How would you feel this morning if, as you sat in your pew, there was a man beside you who was to be hanged tomorrow? You would say, "O that God might bless the word to that poor creature's soul! O that God might send it into his heart, for he is a condemned man!" Do you not know it is so? There is a saint of God, and sitting by his side is a black child of hell; here is an heir of glory and immortality, and the neighbor who touches his arm this morning is dead in sins, and condemned to die! What! will ye not weep and feel for them? Will your hearts be like stone and steel? and will ye be worse than brutes, and let them perish without a sigh, without a prayer, without a tear? No; if we can pray, we will pray for them, that God in his mercy may yet give them grace to save them from the wrath to come. Poor sinners! do not despise my blessed Master, I beseech you. If you knew him you would love him, I know. O poor wicked sinner! thou who feelest self-condemned, conscience-stricken, hast thou no love to Jesus? Ah! if thou didst but know how much Jesus Christ loves thee, thou wouldst love him at once. I know a man who said he never was so struck by anything in all his life as when he heard—

"Jesus, lover of my soul!"

"Oh!" said he, "I did not recollect any thing in the sermon but those words at the beginning of a hymn—

"'Jesus, lover of my soul!'"

He then went to a friend of mine, and he said—

"'Jesus, lover of my soul!'"

Do you think Jesus Christ is the 'lover of *my* soul?' If I thought he was I think I could love him at once." The friend said, "Ah, well! if you feel like that, Jesus is the lover of your soul." Oh! beloved, what would you give if you might but call Jesus Christ your lover and your friend—if you could but know he loved you! Do you sigh for an interest in his love? Ah! then he does love you, for you would not have wanted him to love you if he had not set his heart upon you. Have you a desire for Jesus? then Jesus has a thousand times as much desire for you. I tell you Christ is more pleased to save poor sinners than poor sinners are to be saved. The shepherd is more ready to reclaim the lost sheep than the sheep is to be reclaimed. So let me tell thee, poor soul, Jesus has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; but he has a pleasure deep as the sea, high as heaven, wide as the east is from the west, and as unsearchable as his own divinity, in saving souls. Only believe in his name, thou sinner—to thee I preach, thou sinner; thou actual, *bonâ fide* sinner; thou real sinner—to thee I preach: Jesus Christ says, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Believest thou this? Wilt thou put thy trust in him? Wilt thou—

> "Renounce thy ways and works with grief,
> And fly to this most sure relief?"

Wilt thou drop into his arms, and let him carry thee? Wilt thou fall upon the Rock of Ages, and let that sustain thee? If thou dost it now, this moment, thou shalt become in this happy moment a changed man. Thou shalt be no longer an heir of wrath, but a child of grace; and thy salvation shall become as inevitably secure as if thou wast even now among the glorified.

# SERMON VII.

## A TIME OF FINDING FOR LOST SHEEP

"I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment."—EZEK. xxxiv. 16.

IT is a great mercy that God never leaves his church. He has not made a church as a watch-maker constructs a watch, which, after being wound up is left to depend upon the strength and fitness of the machinery; but he has made a church which, though fitted with the best of machinery, needs his hand every moment to keep it in motion;—he has lighted the lamps, but he walks among the golden candlesticks; he has placed the pillars of the temple, but his own mighty shoulders are the actual support thereof: he has not left the church to his ministers, but he himself is the great Bishop and Shepherd of souls. Even if, as some affirm, there were no immediate Divine interpositions in the works of Providence, we know that there are such interpositions constantly and every moment in the works of grace. We have direct experimental evidence of God's ever-watchful care over his church. He does not deal with his people only through instruments, but he himself takes the church in his own hands. It is his own declaration, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it: I will keep it night and day." Thus doth he speak of his vineyard. So, too, in this chapter. For awhile the shepherds had domineered over the flock; evil shepherds, who had crept into the office, fed themselves and not the sheep. It would have been an ill day for the church, if Divine interposition were not the rule of his government; but, because it is so, God said, "Away, ye shepherds! I am against you; I will require my flock at your hands. Behold I, even I, will both

search my sheep and seek them out. Away, ye that have dispersed and scattered my family! I am about to make bare mine arm. As ye have proved unworthy servants, your Master himself is coming; as ye have not fed the people of my pasture, and have not gathered together my flock, I myself will grasp the crook in my own hand." He speaks in his wrath to the foolish shepherds, yet he mingles his threats with pity for those he elsewhere calls "the flock of slaughter." "I will feed even you, O poor of the flock! I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." Ah, beloved! if the Lord did not interfere in his church continually, the church would cease to exist; if the doctrines of his holy word had been left to man's teaching, they would by degrees have so degenerated that the church would not have had a particle of truth in its midst. If God had not stretched over his truth the broad ægis of his own omnipotence, truth would have ceased out of the land, and those who profess to be its ministers would have all prophesied lies in the name of the Lord. The preservation of truth in our midst is owing to the direct and immediate interposition of the Almighty. And mark it well: the inward witness of the truth in the heart of every individual believer is an instance and evidence of the same unceasing care, inasmuch as He only can apply it to the conscience with quickening power. There is not force enough in truth to convert souls, without the influence of the Holy Spirit. The minister may be a good under-shepherd—he may endeavor to feed the flock; but God's flock can not be fed, nor can God's wandering sheep be gathered home, unless the chief Shepherd, the great and mighty Archbishop, even Jesus Christ, shall interfere, and himself do the work. The Divine interposition of God in the midst of his church is her great bulwark, her hope, her shield, her stay. What we want just now is not so much more shepherds, perhaps, not other shepherds—albeit, when the Lord sends laborers into the field, it is because the crops are to be gathered in—but we want the great Master himself to visit us and say, "I will do my own work; since ye will not faithfully and

fearlessly preach, I will come and interfere, that my word may be fully and boldly proclaimed."

Now notice what God has promised to do. In this text there is a character very graphically and minutely described; and we shall look at the four sentences as descriptive of that one character—"*that which was lost; that which was driven away; that which was broken; and that which was sick.*" Then we shall look at the sentences one by one, as being very possibly *descriptions of four different characters.* We shall also endeavor to speak of the sweet promises appended to each character, and conclude with a solemn warning to "the fat and the strong."

I. First, then, notice the four features of character here: "that which was lost; that which was driven away; that which was broken; that which was sick." We say that sometimes all four of these meet in one individual.

To begin with "THAT WHICH WAS LOST." Doubtless there are some here who have felt in their hearts the solemn meaning of this wonderful word "lost." Not only have I no doubt, but I have strong hopes that some souls here present are really and actually lost in their own experience. It may seem a cruel thing that I should wish you to feel yourselves lost, but it is a well-intentioned cruelty; because if you are lost, this promise is addressed to you, that God will seek that which was lost. I shall endeavor, therefore, to tell you how men feel when they are brought to know the dreadful word "lost" applicable to themselves.

A man is never lost until he is *devoid of all strength.* See you the mariner who has fallen from the ship? As long as those brawny arms of his can stem the current, as long as he can buffet the waves and hurl them aside with the strong heart of resistance, he gives up nought for lost. Ay, and should his arms become weary, if he can float a little, and with one hand move himself amid the billows of the deep, he still thinks it is not all over yet. And while there is one particle of strength remaining his hopes are too buoyant to give himself up for a lost man. Suppose him to have grasped a spar; as long as ever those hands of his can, with a death-clutch, keep

hold of that floating piece of timber, he does not consider himself lost. Fond hope still whispers in his ear, "Hold on, thou art not lost yet; some ship may cross this way, Providence may guide its path hither, and thou mayest yet be delivered. Hold on, thou art not lost while a sinew retains its might, while there is any vital force in thy frame." So, soul, thou canst never say thou art lost till thou feelest in thy heart an utter departure of all thy strength. Hast thou been brought to feel that there is nothing which of thyself thou canst do apart from the strength of the Holy Spirit? There was a time when thou couldst pray, when thou couldst repent, when thou couldst believe after thine own fashion with thine own supposed strength: is that time all passed over now? Art thou saying, "I have no power to do any one of those things without grace from on high! I would, but can not pray; I would, but can not repent; this strong heart will not dissolve, although I strive to melt it; this haughty mind will resist the Saviour, although I wish to be led in chains of grace a willing captive to my Lord?" Art thou brought to feel that if thy salvation depended upon one motion of thy soul in the right direction thou must be lost, for thou hast no spiritual strength? Art thou lying down shorn of all thy might, bereft of all help and hope in thyself; and dost thou confess, "I can do nothing without thee?" Well, then, thou art one of those whom Christ has come to save. This death unto the law is the precursor of thy being made alive to Christ, and a sure sign that grace is at work in thy soul. So long as thou hast one particle of carnal strength, God will never show thee his salvation; so long as thou thinkest to do one solitary good thing of thyself, or reliest upon one particle of good works for thy redemption, thou art under the ban and curse of the law, and art not brought to know the covenant-plan of mercy. Oh! when thou art stripped of all, when thou sayest, "Divinity must work, for humanity hath failed; God's will must conquer my will, or else I am lost,"—then rejoice, rejoice! though thou givest thyself up for lost, it is now that God writes thee saved. "I will seek that which was lost."

Again, a man is never thoroughly lost until, not only his

strength has failed him, but *he hath come to his wit's end.* You know, David describes the mariners at sea as rolling to and fro, staggering like a drunken man, and at their wit's end. While the captain could devise any scheme for scudding before the wind, or evading the tempest, or nearing the harbor, or arriving at the haven, he gave not up his ship for lost; but when every device had failed,—when, after suggesting twenty plans, all laid hold upon as sovereign remedies, but which all failed, he was at his wit's end, or, as the margin reads, "his wisdom is swallowed up," then he gave himself up for being really lost. Have I one here who is at his wit's end? Once he said, "I will do this, and then I shall be saved; I will forego that lust, I will renounce that crime, I will moderate my conduct, I will behave myself more Christian-like, and then I shall be saved." Hast thou tried these high resolves, and have they failed thee? Perhaps thou hast sought after ceremonies and said, "I will shelter myself in the church, keep her ritual, and zealously obey her rubrics;" yet that has failed thee. Thou hast tried scheme after scheme, only to discover each and all alike abortive. And now thou dost anxiously inquire, "What must I do to be saved?" Do you say, "I have done all that reason could dictate; I have followed every maxim I could learn, as I ran hither and thither for counsel; I have strained every power mortal can exercise; I have taxed my poor brain till its fitful fancies bewilder me—and, alas! all in vain: what must I do? what shall I do? Let me tell thee. Thou art to-day like a traveler who has lost his way in a wood. Thou thoughtest that there was a path, and sorely hast thou been disappointed, until, entangled in the brambles, thou hast rent thy clothes and torn thy flesh. How sure thou didst make of some way of escape; but lo! every avenue was blocked up, and thou couldst not get out. Thou hast climbed the highest tree in the forest, to see where the end of the dark wood should be, but the further thou didst look the more intricate did it appear. At length, thy hopes extinguished, thy plans defeated, thy strength exhausted, thy tongue parched, and thine eyes smarting, all that thou canst do is, like the poor traveler in the desert, when the water is

spent and his power gone, to lay thee down in fell despair and die. Art thou such an one? Hast thou tried everything and has everything failed thee? Art thou now locked up in Despair's castle? If so, I commend to thee this sure promise: Christ came to seek the lost; and, oh! couldst thou believe it, what a joyous day this would be! Thou wouldst go out of his house dancing for joy of heart, saying, "I went there poor lost one, but the Shepherd of Israel has found me, for Christ came to seek that which was lost."

"Depths of mercy! can there be
Mercy yet reserved for me?"

Again, a man is not lost until *the door of hope is shut fast.* No man in the world ever gives himself up for lost as long as he hath a grain of hope. Tell the sick man that he must die, for the physician hath pronounced his case hopeless, and will he believe you? No; he will cherish the thought that he may yet rally. Has one case of recovery ever been known? Then he hopes his may not prove fatal. Has one miraculous cure been wrought? He thinks there may be another; or if not, perhaps that his case may be the first; and so he hopes on, and does not consider his condition desperate. The poor sinner, when lost, gives all up as hopeless; and he says, "I have no reason to hope that Christ will have mercy upon me. He might save all the rest of the world, but upon me he will never look with eyes of compassion. Here have I been lying for weeks and months by Bethesda's pool; the angel has often stirred the water; I have seen others step in, and they have been saved: my mother has been saved, my brother and my sister have found deliverance; yet here am I just the same as ever. I go to God's house, but I sit there as an alien—I am not like one of the family, and I know I am lost. It seems as if the ear of God were shut against my prayer; when I cry unto him, he answereth me not; when my sore runneth in the night season, he disregardeth the voice of my groaning. Alas! that my prayer is like the prayer of the wicked, an abomination to the Lord. I feel that he hath cast me out of his sight,

and that I am condemned already!" What, then, I ask, is thy case too hard for him? "Nay," say you, "but he will not. I have called so long, I have cried so often, surely God hath forgotten to be gracious; I am not one of his elect; he hath shut up his bowels of compassion, and I never can be saved."

Hear this: Christ came to save thee. If thou feelest all that, let me solemnly assure thee, in God's name, that though lost in thyself, thou art saved in Christ. Would to God that all of you who hear me this day were either agonizing over your being lost, or rejoicing that ye are found. Ye were then equally safe, if not equally happy. I had rather, O ye careless sinners! that terrors took hold upon you, and fears compassed you about, than that ye should be dancing on the mountains of folly, and revelling in your sins, unconscious of danger. Know this, ye light-hearted, ye giddy and ye gay ones, the hour of your damnation draweth nigh. But as for you, who are broken in pieces, sighing and groaning, because ye think your case is hopeless, let me tell you, as God's ambassador, that your case is not *hopeless*, but *hopeful*. Ye may call to mind, like Jeremiah, "your affliction and your misery, the wormwood and the gall," and say with him, "Therefore have I hope." Have I faithfully described thee? Wilt thou answer to thy name, as a prodigal son, as a lost child? Then, lost as thou art, thou hast a Father. So lost as to need finding,—so lost as to need saving,—methinks I hear a Father's yearnings, "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." Methinks I hear the Saviour's voice saying, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." A vision flits before my eyes, I think I see the blessed Jesus in shepherd's garb, with staff in hand, bearing on his shoulders a lost sheep whom he has this morning recovered. Just now the poor thing was wandering in the wilderness in a solitary way; now he is laid on the everlasting shoulders, guarded by omnipotent power, and kept secure from harm. Happy soul!

the angels rejoice over thee, though thy heart hath not yet realized the sense of security which could give thee joy.

There is another characteristic of the man that feels himself lost more horrible than those I have mentioned. Waking to a consciousness that he is lost, not only does he behold the gate of hope shut, but *the gate of hell opened.* Ah! my friends, I speak now as one who should know, as one who hath felt in his own soul what his lips describe. I have passed through that experience which I have told you heretofore, and this have I likewise known. Well do I remember, after many a month of prayer without an answer from God, when faith I had none, and my hope had given up the ghost, I thought God would never save me; and just then I thought the gate of hell was opened before my soul; for if ever a soul did experience a foretaste of perdition I think I did; and I believe many of you experienced the same before you found peace with God. You knew you were not in hell, and yet you thought even that almost preferable to your condition, you were in such dread suspense. Sometimes there was a glimmer of hope, but that only made your darkness more visible. As John Bunyan hath it, the hell-drum was beating in your ears; you heard it from morning till night, and from night till morning—"Lost, lost, lost! thou wilt soon be in hell!" Dost thou not remember when thou didst walk the earth and think that every tuft of grass would be as the mouth of hell to open and swallow thee up—when thou couldst not sleep for frightful dreams, and didst wake and feel the very terror which haunted thee in thy night visions? Thy poor conscience was lashed by the whip of the law, and while thy wounds were smarting thou didst cry, "O God! what, wilt thou never save me? The sorrows of death have compassed me about, and all thy billows have gone over me." Dost thou not remember when, like David, all thy bones were out of joint, and thou saidst, "Create me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me;" but there was no answer? And, moreover, Satan suggested a reply: "What! renew a right spirit in THEE! Thou art the worst wretch that ever lived; thy death-warrant is signed, the fagot is burning

now that will consume thee, the chains are already forged to bind thee forever, and thou shalt be with me shut up under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Now, is there such an one here—one to whom hell's gates are opened—upon whom fiends seem perpetually hissing; one who is brought to the black land of confusion, to the valley of the shadow of death, where not only is there no hope, but where the portending clouds seem to be gathered round him? Let him take heart: Christ has come to save such; and as surely as the devil is let loose upon thee in this way, Christ will bind him yet; he will break the teeth of the oppressor, and will take thee, his poor lost sheep, out of the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear! Art thou so lost? Then here is thy promise, "I will seek that which was lost."

But thou sayest, "Sir, I have had too long a trial to think it possible; I have attended your ministry, and other ministries, for many a long year. Sometimes I have thought that surely I might be saved, but ah! it is of no use. You may speak of all the promises you like, they have nothing to do with me; I write my name down amongst the lost, and charm you never so wisely, I am like the deaf adder—never, never to be comforted! It is all over now, I am locked up in this iron cage of despair—lost, lost! beyond all hope; and I cannot believe what you say." Ah! poor soul, but just notice what the text says, "I will seek that which was lost." I have been seeking thee for many a Sabbath, and so have other ministers, but we have never found thee. Poor soul, God's seeking is very different from ours. Oh! if I could, I would come to thee with these weeping eyes of mine, and say, "Poor sinner, do take heart." I would go down upon my knees with thee, and offer my supplications for thee that thou mightest believe in Christ; but I know it would avail little, unless my Master sought thee. Oh! the shepherds have been after thee many a day, but they could not find thee; remember God knows, as we know not, where thou art. If thou art in the deepest pit in the forest, his almighty eye can see to the bottom. Ay, and in one of the favored moments of the day of salvation,—that time accepted,—he will send home

a promise so sweetly that all thy fetters shall break off in an instant—thy night shall be scattered—thy dawn begin; and he will give thee the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Believe now, and thou shalt be comforted now; for the time of faith is the time of comfort.

There is a second point which often meets in the same character: "I WILL BRING AGAIN THAT WHICH WAS DRIVEN AWAY." Souls there are, not only lost, but driven away. "I could tell you of a time," says one, "when I had a hope of heaven; or, at least, I thought I had; I groaned and prayed and strove, and one Sabbath day—I shall never forget it—I stepped into the house of God, and, during the reading of a chapter, or the singing of a hymn, I fondly thought that I had seen Christ, and had believed in him; but, oh! it was only for a moment: I was only permitted just to look into the well of living water; no one came to draw water for me, and give me to drink. I thought for a single second, 'Now is the hour of my salvation;' something said within my heart, 'Now is the appointed time, to-day is the day of salvation;' and I almost began to smile within myself at the thought that I had found the Lord. But, sir, I was driven away, and I dare not go again. If I were only lost, methinks I could believe what you have said. But, ah! I was once very near being a believer; I was just upon the edge of having faith in Christ—but it only makes the night darker to think I once saw a star; for I was driven away." Now there are different ways in which poor sinners are driven away, and in any case it is the devil's work. Sometimes unbelief does it: the sinner sees Christ on the cross, the blood flowing from his hands and feet, and he thinks,—

> "Oh! could I but believe,
> Then all would easy be."

He thinks of the happy effects that would follow faith in Christ, and something says within him, "Venture on him, venture wholly; let no other trust intrude." And he is just

going to do it, when suddenly there comes a great black thought, "What, you! you have no right to come; away with you!" He has just pressed through the crowd, and is going to touch the hem of his Master's garment, but ere his finger reaches it, some one has pushed before him, and he goes away abashed; and, all the more so, to think that he should have ever had the presumption, as he deems it, to hope for salvation. Unbelief has pushed many a sinner away from Christ just when he was coming, and has kept him away for a long time.

Sometimes legal preachers drive souls away; they preach a gospel so much mixed up with law, so united with the doings of man, that the poor soul just coming to Christ gets driven away. And even some of God's true ministers—aye, the very best of them—sometimes drive poor sinners away from Christ. When they speak of the experience of the saint, they speak the truth, perhaps; but then there was something that was wanting; the poor soul takes what is said against him; he writes bitter things against himself, because he does not feel that he comes up to the experience which some of the Lord's children have had. Ah! we cannot always tell when we are driving poor souls away from Christ. Often, when we think we are wooing we are driving them away; when we would be winning to the Saviour, some harsh expression of ours frightens sinners away from him. Ah! poor soul, hast thou been driven away? Dost thou understand and sympathize with what I have said? Before I knew the Lord, I could declare that I was driven away. Once, under a powerful sermon, my heart shook within me, and was dissolved in the midst of my bowels; I thought I would seek the Lord, and I bowed my knee and wrestled, and poured out my heart before him. I ventured within his sanctuary to hear his word, hoping that in some favored hour he would send a precious promise to my consolation; but, ah! that wretched afternoon I heard a sermon wherein Christ was not; I had no longer any hope. I would have sipped at that fountain, but I was driven away; I felt that I would have believed in Christ, and I longed and sighed for him. But, ah! that dreadful

sermon, and those dreadful things that were uttered; my poor soul knew not what was truth, or what was error; but I thought the man was surely preaching the truth, and I was driven back. I dared not go, I could not believe, I could not lay hold on Christ; I was shut out, if no one else was. Is there some one here who has been driven away? I may have done it, and I will weep before God in secret on account of it. But let me cheer you. Hear this: "I will bring again that which was driven away." As surely as you ever did come once you will be brought back again; that heavenly hour shall once more return; that blessed day shall dawn afresh; Christ shall appear, and his love and mercy shall be bestowed on you. He has drawn you once and he will draw you again, for God never fails. He may, for wise ends and purposes, suffer you to be driven away once; but he will ultimately bring you to himself, for he has said, "I will bring again that which was driven away."

The other two points have, I think, something to do with the driving away; "I WILL BIND UP THAT WHICH WAS BROKEN." This, I think, refers to those who have been broken by being driven away: the shepherds smote them so hard that they even broke their bones. How many have there been who, when they thought they had found Christ, but were driven away, have felt from that moment that they were broken—that they were more sorely wounded than ever they had been? They did entertain some little hope before, that Christ might look upon them with love, but now they are broken to pieces. And that breaking, together with the breaking of the Holy Spirit, which has ground them as in the mortar and pestle of conviction, has so broken them, that they feel utterly destroyed; besides the sickness of sin, they have upon them a sickness partly engendered by the strokes of those who drove them away. I may be taking an extreme case, when I suppose one character in whom those four points meet. Have I any one here in such a position—not only "lost," not only "driven away," but "broken" and "sick" likewise? Thy head has begun to whirl; thou knowest not how it is; but so strong have these convictions got hold of

thee, that thy very mind seems to suffer from them;—a mystery to thyself, thou canst not tell where thou art. Some say that thou art mad, and thou thinkest within thyself that they have good ground for the suspicion. Thou art sick of thine existence, and almost ready to take away thy life; a terrible giddiness has seized thee, as if a hell were kindled in thy breast, to be the prelude of despair and irrevocable destruction, the first notes of the "Miserere" of eternal woe. Art thou reduced to such a terrible extremity? Art thou sick as well as broken and driven away and lost? Hear this, "I will seek that which was lost." Canst thou not believe God is true? "I will bring again that which was driven away." Dost thou think God's "*I will*" stands for nothing? "I will bind up that which was broken." Canst thou not implicitly believe what God so absolutely affirms? "I will strengthen that which was sick." O, sick one! God give thee grace to understand that he means what he says, and to believe that he will do what he promises. Come, now, is there one here in whom all these troubles meet? Let him lift up his head with joy from this moment, for Jesus Christ has come to save him, and his sighings shall, ere long, be exchanged for songs of thanksgiving.

II. Now very briefly let me hint at the four characters separately: First, "*that which was lost.*" This, of course, is the awakened sinner, who is made to know that in Adam he is lost, and by his own sins he is utterly ruined and destroyed. Such an one has here the Divine authority for hope that God will seek him, and that he shall yet be saved.

"*I will bring again that which was driven away.*" This refers to the backslider, who has been driven away from God by sin. Strong temptations have goaded him to follow the propensities of his own wicked will. Poor backslider! God will restore thee. O! I could tell of some here who have greatly and grievously departed from the paths of righteousness; and their leanness will testify that they have been driven from the pastures. Let me speak to you in God's name: he will bring back "that which was driven away." "O! but," thou sayest, "six years ago I dishonored my profession, and

ever since I have been as one estranged from his people." Ay, but if thou art the Lord's child, if it were sixty years, he would bring thee back with weeping and lamentation unto Zion. "O! sir, but I have so disgraced the cause." Turn thee, turn thee at his bidding; God invites thee to come. My backsliding brother, my backsliding sister, I will not condemn thee; I may become a backslider too, and the best of these who now stand fast by Jesus may be likewise "overtaken in a fault." Thou art condemned in thine own heart enough; I would not that thou shouldst "be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you." 'Tis even so with our God. "Yet doth he devise means that his banished be not expelled from him." Come, Ephraim; thou hast been a stubborn child, still thy father bids thee come. Come, prodigal; thou hast wasted thy substance, yet a father's loving eyes have beheld thee when thou wast a great way off; come, his breast heaves with love for thee. Come, thou driven away one, come to him; he loved thee before thou lovedst him, and though thou didst rebel against him, he has never ceased to love thee. Though thou hast sinned much, his loving heart is immutably the same. O! believe in his goodness in the teeth of thine own unworthiness, so shalt thou be comforted, and the word on which he hath caused thee to hope shall be fulfilled: "I will bring again that which was driven away."

The next character is *the broken one.* The child of God is often broken; especially if he has been a backslider, he is sure to have broken bones, and he is likely to walk halting all the rest of his days. Or the believer may be broken by trouble, by affliction, by assaults of the enemy; he may be broken on account of the inbred sin manifested to him by the Holy Spirit. But, broken one, God will help thee, for he hath said, "I will bind up that which was broken." Sweet thought! Precious promises are the ligatures with which God himself binds up broken bones. Marvelous surgeon! God Almighty himself bowing down from heaven to put the heavenly lini

ment and the fair white linen of a Saviour's righteousness round about the wounded spirit! Broken one, rejoice; God says, "I will heal thee."

Lastly, there are *the sick ones*, and many such there are among the Lord's people. Their faith is weak; their prayers are not so spiritual and fervent as they could desire; there is a chill about them, or else a heat of feverish anxiety—their hearts often palpitate with gloomy fears and sad forebodings; they are not so healthy as they desire to be before God; they long for that perfect love which casteth out fear. Ay, then, dost thou feel that sickness, poor saint, this morning? Say not, God will let thee die, because thou art sick. No, for he says, "I will strengthen that which was sick." So, then, saints in all your distresses, sinners in all your sins, here are exceedingly great promises ministered unto you this morning: and may the Holy Spirit show you their infinite value, and apply them to you with demonstration and with power.

How unspeakable the satisfaction of a poor sufferer when he hears the physician minutely describe all his ailments! But to hear him speak with confidence that, however painful, no symptom is beyond his skill, how the patient will brighten up. Thy case, my brother, is more cheering still. Have you not sometimes heard your doctor say, "When you recover from this sickness you will be better than you were before?" Well, now, think for one moment how far God's mercies exceed our miseries! how far his cure extends beyond our maladies! how sure he is to do for his people exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think! Then, ho! despairing soul, what though thou hast all four maladies, thou shalt have all four promises! If so be thou art a member of his family, for every affliction and every chastisement thou shalt get so many peaceable fruits of righteousness, that thou wilt afterwards kiss the rod and subscribe to David's testimony, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." And mark you this—in the fulfillment of his promises ye shall receive *double* for all your distresses.

And, now, can I say aught more? Have I not gone to the uttermost case in the application of my text? Are there any

poor souls that I have not reached? Then let me try once again. My dear friends, do you know yourselves to be lost and ruined by the fall? Do you feel that you are utterly undone, ruined, and lost without Christ? Well, then, in his name I solemnly declare this great truth of the gospel, that all who know this and feel it may confidently believe that there is salvation for them. The only proof that I can give you that you shall be saints is, that you feel that you are now sinners. Oh! poor sin-sick soul, I thank God that thou art afflicted with this sickness, for thou wilt have recourse to the physician. Oh! poor sinner, I thank God that thou knowest thyself poor, for God will make thee rich.

But as for such of you as are "fat and strong," that boast yourselves that you are good and have need of nothing, go your way; ye need no gospel and I have none to preach to you; ye who are so good and excellent, ye need no Christ to save you; ye will despise the man that comes in Christ's name to preach free, unmerited, sovereign love. And what if ye do? Doth he care for your contempt? Not one whit. Reproach will sit lightly on him if he may but win souls to be found in Christ at last. If ye need not the medicine, spurn it if you please; but you are fools for your pains. If ye want it not for yourselves let others have it. If ye are so whole that ye need not the physician, hoot him not while he goes to attend upon those who feel their danger imminent. Grumble not that I preach no gospel to you, for you want it not. You are as good as you can be—in fact, rather better than most Christians, in your own opinion; you are no cants, no hypocrites. You may want a patch or two of religion to make you all right at last. Your garments are white and courtly, they only want a little brushing to take the dust off. Alas! for you, sirs, hell is built for such good people as you are; you shall find no place in heaven; its blessed mansions are prepared for sinners saved by grace, and hell's dark dungeons remain for those who reject Christ, despise mercy, and scorn to sue for pardon, because they deem themselves too good, too holy, too excellent to need a Saviour. I say again, as for you who are fat and strong, God shall feed you with judgment. You think to stand by your

own works, and your best works will destroy you. You shall appear before God in your own characters, and they shall ruin you for ever. You think your own merits will suffice, and that God will bestow on you a reward. Yes, and he will reward you, and a terrible recompense it shall be, when you shall find yourselves receiving what you have earned—tribulation, wrath, and destruction from the presence of the Lord your God. Your consciences tell you that what I speak is true. Despise the warning now, but in the silent moments of your sober thought this shall cling to you, this shall haunt you. When your guilt recoils on your memory, when your heart and flesh fail, and your reason totters at the prospect of a hereafter, you will howl with misery and cry out, "Woe worth the day!" Now, ye lost and ruined, come to Jesus; ye broken sinners, believe in Jesus; ye that are bruised and mangled by the fall, come to Jesus.

"With true belief and true repentance,
Every grace to bring you nigh,
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ, and buy.

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him.
This he gives you,
'Tis his Spirit's rising beam."

Lost souls, ye doubly lost, ye more than ruined, my Master begs you to come; he has sent me to you this morning. Just as Abraham of old sent his servant to go wooing for his son, so my God has sent me as his servant to bid you come to Jesus. What sayest thou, lost sinner, wilt thou be made whole? Does thy heart leap into thy mouth, and dost thou answer, "Ay, with joy I would be made whole?" Then that *willingness* God has given thee; the feeling of thy need he has bestowed on thee, and he bids thee now believe. Canst thou not believe Christ? See him there hanging on the cross; on that bloody tree behold him. Sinner, wilt thou not believe him now? What! dost

thou think he dost not love thee, when he gave up his body to death for thee? What! not love thee, and yet die for thee? "Ay," sayest thou, "I do not believe he did die for me." What! not believe what he himself has said? He said he came to save sinners: dost thou doubt whether thou art a sinner? "No, sir," you reply, "I know that." Well, then, wilt thou doubt my Master when he says he came to save sinners? Wilt thou not believe that he came to save thee? Or, if that be too bold for thy timid spirit, at least thou mayest say—

"I can but perish if I go:
I am resolved to try:
For if I stay away, I know
I must for ever die.
But if I die, with mercy sought,
When I the King have tried,
That were to die—delightful thought!—
As sinner never died!"

Sinner never did die so; try it, soul, and thou shalt find it true.

# SERMON VIII.

## THE TWO TALENTS.

"He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—MATTHEW XXV. 22, 23.

"EVERY good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." All that men have they must trace to the Great Fountain, the giver of all good. Hast thou talents? They were given thee by the God of talents. Hast thou time? hast thou wealth, influence, power? Hast thou powers of tongue? Hast thou powers of thought? Art thou poet, statesman, or philosopher? Whatever be thy position, and whatever be thy gifts, remember that they are not thine, but they are lent thee from on high. No man hath anything of his own, except his sins. We are but tenants at will. God hath put us into his estates, and he hath said, "Occupy till I come." Though our vineyards bear never so much fruit, yet the vineyard belongs to the King, and though we are to take the hundred for our hire, yet King Solomon must have his thousand. All the honor of our ability and the use of it must be unto God, because he is the Giver. The parable tells us this very pointedly; for it makes every person acknowledge that his talents come from the Lord. Even the man who digged in the earth and hid his Lord's money, did not deny that his talent belonged to his Master; for though his reply, "Lo, there thou hast that is thine," was exceedingly impertinent, yet it was not a denial of this fact. So that even this man was ahead of those who deny their obligations to God, who superciliously toss their heads at the very mention of obedience to their Creator, and spend their time and their

powers rather in rebellion against him than in his service. Oh, that we were all wise to believe and to act upon this most evident of all truths, that everything we have, we have received from the Most High.

Now, there are some men in the world who have but few talents. Our parable says, "One had five, and another two." To them I shall address myself this morning; and I pray that the few pointed things I may say, may be blessed of God to their edification or rebuke. First, I shall notice *the fact that there are many persons who have but few talents*, and I will try to account for God's dispensing but few to them. Secondly, I shall remind them that *even for these few talents they must be brought to account.* And thirdly, I shall conclude by making the comforting observation, that *if our few talents be rightly used, neither our own conscience nor our Master's judgment shall condemn us for not having more.*

I. First, then, GOD HAS MADE SOME MEN WITH FEW TALENTS. You very often hear men speak of one another as if God had made no mental differences at all. One man finds himself successful, and he supposes that if every one else could have been as industrious and as persevering as himself, every one must necessarily have been as successful. You will often hear remarks against ministers who are godly and earnest men, but who do not happen to have much attracting power, and they are called drones and lazy persons, because they cannot make much of a stir in the world, whereas the reason may be, that they have but little talent, and are making the best use of what they have, and therefore ought not to be rebuked for the littleness of what they are able to accomplish. It is a fact, which every man must see, that even in our birth there is a difference. All children are not alike precocious, and all men certainly are not alike capable of learning or of teaching God hath made eminent and marvelous differences. We are not to suppose that all the difference between a Milton and a man who lives and dies without being able to read, has been caused by education. There was doubtless a difference originally, and though education will do much, it cannot do everything. Fertile ground, when well-tilled will necessarily bring

forth more than the best tilled estate, the soil of which is hard and sterile. God has made great and decided differences; and we ought, in dealing with our fellow-men, to recollect this, lest we should say harsh things of those very men to whom God will afterwards say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

But why is it that God has not given to all men like talents? My first answer shall be, because God is a Sovereign, and of all attributes, next to his love, God is the most fond of displaying his sovereignty. The Lord God will have men know that he has a right to do what he wills with his own. Hence it is, that in salvation he gives it to some and not to others; and his only reply to any accusation of injustice is, "Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" The worm is not to murmur because God did not make it an angel, and the fish that swims the sea must not complain because it hath not wings to fly into the highest heavens. God had a right to make his creatures just what he pleased, and though men may dispute his right, he will hold and keep it inviolate against all comers. That he may hedge his right about and make vain man acknowledge it, in all his gifts he continually reminds us of his sovereignty. "I will give to this man," he says, "a mind so acute that he shall pry into all secrets; I will make another so obtuse, that none but the plainest elements of knowledge shall ever be attainable by him. I will give to one man such a wealth of imagination, that he shall pile mountain upon mountain of imagery, till his language seems to reach to celestial majesty; I will give to another man a soul so dull, that he shall never be able to originate a poetic thought." Why this, O God? The answer comes back, "Shall I not do what I will with mine own?" "So, then, the children being not yet born, neither having done good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, it was written, the elder shall serve the younger." And so it is written concerning men, that one of them shall be greater than another; one shall bow his neck, and the other put his foot upon it, for the

Lord hath a right to dispose of places and of gifts, of talents and wealth, just as seemeth good in his sight.

Now, most men quarrel with this. But mark, the thing that you complain of in God, is the very thing that you love in yourselves. Every man likes to feel that he has a right to do with his own as he pleases. We all like to be little sovereigns. You will give your money freely and liberally to the poor; but if any man should impertinently urge that he had a claim upon your charity, would you give unto him? Certainly not; and who shall impeach the greatness of your generosity in so doing? It is even as that parable, that we have in one of the Evangelists, where, after the men had toiled, some of them twelve hours, some of them six, and some of them but one, the Lord gave every man a penny. Oh! I would meekly bow my head, and say, "My Lord, hast thou given me one talent? then I bless thee for it, and I pray thee bestow upon me grace to use it rightly. Hast thou given to my brother ten talents? I thank thee for the greatness of thy kindness towards him; but I neither envy him, nor complain of thee." Oh! for a spirit that bows always before the sovereignty of God.

Again: God gives to one five, and to another two talents, because the Creator is a lover of variety. It was said that order is heaven's first law; surely variety is the second; for in all God's works, there is the most beautiful diversity. Look ye towards the heavens at night: all the stars shine not with the same brilliance, nor are they placed in straight lines, like the lamps of our streets. Then turn your eyes below: see in the vegetable world, how many great distinctions there are, ranging from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall, or the moss that is smaller still. See, how from the huge mammoth tree, that seems as if beneath its branches it might shade an army, down to the tiny lichen, God hath made everything beautiful, but everything full of variety. Look on any one tree, if you please: see how every leaf differs from its fellow—how even the little tiny buds that are at this hour bursting at the scent of the approaching perfume of spring, differ from each other—not two of them alike.

Look again, upon the animated world: God hath not made every creature like unto another. How wide the range—from the colossal elephant, to the coney that burrows in the rock—from the whale, that makes the deep hoary with its lashings, to the tiny minnow that skims the brook; God hath made all things different, and we see variety everywhere. I doubt not it is the same, even in heaven, for there there are "thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers"—different ranks of angels, perhaps, rising tier upon tier. "One star differeth from another star in glory." And why should not the same rule stand good in manhood? Doth God cast us all in the same mold? It seems not so; for he hath not made our faces alike; no two countenances can be said to be exactly the same, for if there be some likeness, yet is there a manifest diversity. Should minds, then, be alike? Should souls all be cast in the same fashion? Should God's creation dwindle down into a great manufactory, in which everything is melted in the same fire and poured into the same mould? No, for variety's sake, he will have one man a renowned David, and another David's unknown armor bearer; he will have one man a Jeremy, who shall prophesy, and another a Baruch, who shall only read the prophesy; one shall be rich as Dives, another poor as Lazarus; one shall speak with a voice loud as thunder, another shall be dumb; one shall be mighty in word and doctrine, another shall be feeble in speech and slow in words. God will have variety, and the day will come when, looking down upon the world we shall see the beauty of its history to be mightily indebted to the variety of the characters that entered into it.

But a little further. God hath a deeper reason than this. God gives to some men but few talents, because he has many small spheres, and he would have these filled. There is a great ocean, and it needs inhabitants. O Lord, thou hast made Leviathan to swim therein. There is a secret grotto, a hidden cavern, far away in the depths of the sea; its entrance is but small; if there were naught but a Leviathan, it must remain untenanted for ever: a little fish is made, and that small place becomes an ocean unto it. There are a thousand

sprays and twigs upon the trees of the forest; were all eagles, how would the forests be made glad with song, and how could each twig bear its songster? But because God would have each twig have its own music, he has made the little songster to sit upon it. Each sphere must have the creature to occupy it adapted to the size of the sphere. God always acts economically. Does he intend a man to be the pastor of some small parish with four or five hundred inhabitants? Of what use is it giving to that man the abilities of an apostle? Does he intend a woman to be a humble teacher of her own children at home, a quiet trainer of her own family? Would it not even disturb her and injure her if God should make her a poetess, and give her gifts that might electrify a nation? The littleness of her talents will to a degree fit her for the littleness of her sphere. There is some youth who is quite capable of assisting in a Ragged School: perhaps if he had a higher genius he might disdain the work, and so the Ragged School would be without its excellent teacher. There are little spheres, and God will have little men to occupy them. There are posts of important duty, and men shall be found with nerve and muscle fitted for the labor. He has made a statue for every niche, and a picture for every portion of the gallery; none shall be left vacant; but since some niches are small, so shall be the statuettes that occupy them. To some he gives two talents, because two are enough, and five would be too many.

Once more: God gives to men two talents, because in them very often he displays the greatness of his grace in saving souls. You have heard a minister who was deeply read in sacred lore; his wisdom was profound, and his speech graceful. Under his preaching many were converted. Have you never heard it not quite said, but almost hinted, that much of his success was traceable to his learning and to his graceful oratory? But, on the other hand, you have met with a man, rough in his dialect, uncouth in his manners, evidently without any great literary attainments; nevertheless, God has given that man the one talent of an earnest heart; he speaks like a son of thunder; with rough, stern language, he

denounces sin and proclaims the gospel; under him hundreds are converted. The world sneers at him. "I can see no reason for all this," says the scholar; "it is all rubbish—cant; the man knows nothing." The critic takes up his pen, nibs it afresh, dips it in the bitterest ink he can find, and writes a most delightful history of the man in which he goes so far as to say, not that he sees horns on his head, but almost everything but that. He is everything that is bad, and nothing that is good. He utterly denounces him. He is foolish, he is vain, he is base, he is proud, he is illiterate, he is vulgar. There was no word in the English language that was bad enough for him, but one must be coined. And now what says the church? What says the man himself? "Even so, O Lord; now must the glory be unto thee for ever, inasmuch as thou hast chosen the base things of this world, and the things that are not, to bring to naught the things that are." So it seemeth that out of the little God sometimes winneth more glory than he doth out of the great; and I doubt not that he has made some of you with little power to do good, with little influence, and with a narrow sphere, that he may, in the last great day, manifest to angels how much he can do in a little space. You know, dear friends, there are two things that always will attract our attention. One is skill embodied in a stupendous mass. We see the huge ship, the Leviathan, and we wonder that man could have made it; at another time we see an elegant piece of workmanship that will stand upon less than a square inch, and we say, "Well, I can understand how men can make a great ship, but I can not comprehend how an artist could have the patience and the skill to make so minute a thing as this." And ah! my friends, it seems to me that God is not a greater God to our apprehension, when we see the boundless fields of ether and the unnumbered orbs swimming therein, than when we see a humble cottager, and behold God's perfect word carried out in her soul, and God's highest glory wrought from her little talent. Surely if in the little, man can honor himself as well as in the great, the Infinite, and the Eternal, can most of all glorify himself when he stoopeth to the littleness of mankind.

II. Our second proposition was, that even A FEW TALENTS MUST BE ACCOUNTED FOR. We are very apt when we think of the day of judgment, to imagine that certain characters will undergo a more trying process than others. I know I have often involuntarily said, when reading the history of Napoleon, "Here is a man of tremendous ability, the world's master; a dozen centuries might be required to produce such another man; but here is a man who prostitutes all his ability to ambition, carries his armies like a destroying deluge across every country, widows wives, and renders children fatherless, not by hundreds but by thousands, if not by millions. What must be his solemn account when he stands before the throne of God? Shall not the witnesses rise up from the fields of Spain, of Russia, of Italy, of Egypt, of Palestine, and accuse the man who, to gratify his own bold ambition, led them to death?" But will you please to remember that though Napoleon must be a prisoner at the bar, each of us must stand there also? And though our position is not very high, and we have not stood upon the pinnacle of fame, yet we have stood quite high enough to be borne under the observation of the Most High, and we have had just ability enough and power enough to have done mischief in the world, and to be accountable for it. "Oh!" said one, "I thought that surely in the day of judgment he would pass me by; I have been no Tom Paine; I have not been a leader among low and vulgar infidels; I have not been a murderer; I have not been a prince among sinners; I have not been a disturber of the public peace; what few sins I have committed have taken place quietly; nobody has heard of them; I don't think my bad example has gone far; perhaps my children have not been much blessed by my behavior, but, nevertheless, mine has been a very small quantum of mischief, too small to have poisoned any one beside myself. I have been, on the whole, so tolerably moral, that though I cannot say I have served God, yet my defalcations from the path of duty have been slight indeed!" Ah! truly friends! you may think yourselves never so little, but your making yourselves insignificant will not excuse you You have had but little entrusted to you! Then the less

trouble for you to make use of your talents. The man who has many talents requires much hard labor to use them all. He might make the excuse that he found five talents too many to put out in the market at once; you have only one; anybody can lend out his one talent to interest—it will cost you but little trouble to supply that; and inasmuch as you live, and inasmuch as you die, without having improved the one talent, your guilt will be exceedingly increased by the very fact that your talent was but little, and, consequently, the trouble of using it would have been but little too. If you had but little, God required but little of you; why, then, did you not render that? If any man holds a house at a rental of a pound a year, let it be never so small a house for the money, if he brings not his rent there is not one half the excuse for him that there would be if his rent had been a hundred pounds, and he had failed to bring it. You shall be the more inexcusable on account of the little that was required of you. Let me, then, address you, and remind you that you must be brought to account.

Remember, my hearer, that in the day of judgment thy account must be personal; God will not ask you what your church did—he will ask you what you did yourself. Now there is a Sunday-school. If God should try all members of the church in a body, they would each of them say, O Lord, as a body we had an excellent Sunday-school, and had many teachers, and so they would excuse themselves. But no; one by one, all professors must come before him. "What did you do for the Sabbath-school? I gave you a gift for teaching children—what did you do?" "O Lord, there was a Sabbath-school." That has nothing to do with it? What did *you* do? You are not to account now for the company with which you were united, but for yourself as an individual. "O," says one, "there were a number of poor ministers; I was at the Surrey Hall, and so much was done for them." No; what did you do? You must be held personally responsible for your own wealth, for your own ability. "Well," says one, "I am happy to say there is a great deal more preaching now than there used to be; the churches seem to be roused." Yes, sir, and you seem to take part of the credit

to yourself. Do *you* preach more than you used to? You are a minister; do *you* make any greater efforts? Remember, it is not what your brethren are doing, but it is what *you* do that you will be called to account for at the bar of God; and each one of you will be asked this question, "What hast thou done with *thy* talent?" All your connection with churches will avail you nothing; it is your personal doings—your personal service towards God that is demanded of you as an evidence of saving grace. And if others are idle—if others pay not God his due—so much the more reason why you should have been more exceedingly diligent in doing so yourself

Recollect, again, that your account will have to be particular. God will go into all the items of it. At the day of judgment you will not have to cast up a hurried account in the gross, but every item shall be read. Can you prove that? Yes. "For every idle word that man shall speak, he shall be brought unto account at the day of judgment." Now, it is in the items that men go astray "Well," says one, "If I look at my life in the bulk, I am not very much ashamed, but it is those items, those little items—they are the troublesome part of the account, that one does not care to meddle with." Do you know that all yesterday was made up of littles? And the things of to-day are all little, and what you do to-morrow will all be little things. Just as the tiny shells make up the chalk hills, and the chalk hills together make up the range, so the trifling actions make up the whole account, and each of these must be pulled asunder separately. You had an hour to spare the other day—what did you do? You had a voice —how did you use it? You had a pen—you could use that—how did you employ it? Each particular shall be brought out, and there shall be demanded an account for each one. Oh, that you were wise, that ye did not slur this matter, but would take every note in the music of your behavior, and seek to make each note in harmony with its fellow, lest, after all, the psalm of your life may prove to be a hideous discord. Oh, that ye who are without God would remember that your life is assuredly such, that the trial of the ast great day must end in your condemnation.

Again, that account will be very exact, and there will be no getting off without those little things. "Oh! there were a few pecadillos, and very small matters indeed; I never took stock of them at all." But they will all be taken stock of then. When God comes to look into our hearts at last, he will not only look at the great but at the little; every thing will be seen into, the pence sins as well as the pound iniquities —all must be brought against us, and an exact account given.

Again, remember, in the last place, upon this point, that the account will be very impartial at the day of judgment, when all will be tried without any reference to their station. The prince will be summoned to give an account of his talents, and side by side must stand his courtier and his slave. The mightiest emperor must stand at God's bar, as well as the meanest cottager. And all must appear and be tried according to the deeds they have done in the body. As to our professions, they will avail us nothing. We may have been the proudest hypocrites that ever made the world sick with our pride, but we must be searched and examined, as much as if we had been the vilest sinners. We must take our own trial before God's eternal tribunal, and nothing can bias our judge, or give him an opinion for or against us, apart from the evidence. Oh, how solemn this will make the trial, especially if we have no blood of Christ to plead! The great Advocate will get his people an acquittal, through his imputed merits, even though our sin in itself would condemn them. But remember, that without him we shall never be able to stand the fiery ordeal of that last dread assize. "Well," said an old preacher, "when the law was given, Sinai was on a smoke, and it melted like wax; but when the punishment of the law is given, the whole earth will quake and quail. For who shall be able to endure the day of the Lord, the day of God's fierce anger?"

III. The last point is, IF BY DIVINE GRACE (and it is only by divine grace that this can ever be accomplished)—OUR TWO TALENTS BE RIGHTLY USED, THE FACT THAT WE HAD NOT FIVE, WILL BE NO INJURY TO US.

You say, when such a man dies, who stood in the midst of

the church, a triumphant warrior for the truth, the angels will crowd to heaven's gates to see him, for he has been a mighty hero, and done much for his Master. A Calvin or a Luther, with what plaudits shall they be received!—men with talents, who have been faithful to their trust. Yes, but know ye not, that there is many a humble village pastor whose flock scarcely numbers fifty, who toils for them as for his life, who spends hours in praying for their welfare, who uses all the little ability he has in his endeavor to win them to Christ; and do ye imagine that his entry into heaven shall be less triumphant than the entry of such a man as Luther? If so, ye know not how God dealeth with his people. He giveth them rewards, not according to the greatness of the goods with which they were entrusted, but according to their fidelity thereunto, and he that hath been faithful to the least, shall be as much rewarded, as he that hath been faithful in much. I want you briefly to turn to the chapter, to see this. You will note first, that the man with two talents came to his Lord with as great a confidence as the man that had five. "And he said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents; behold, I have gained two talents beside them." I will be bound to say, that while that poor man with the two talents was trading with them, he frequently looked upon his neighbor with the five talents, and said, "Oh, I wish I could do as much as he is doing! See now, he has five talents to put out, and how much interest he has coming every year; Oh, that I could do as much!" And as he went on he often prayed, "O my Lord, give me greater ability, and greater grace to serve thee, for I long to do more." And when he sat down to read his diary, he thought, "Ah, this diary does not tell much. There is no account of my journey through fifty counties; I can not tell how I have travelled from land to land, as Paul did, to preach the truth. No; I have just had to keep in this parish, and been pretty well starved to death, toiling for this people, and if I have added some ten or a dozen to the church, that has been a very great deal to me. Why, I hear that Mr. So-and-so, was privileged to add two or three hundred in a year. Oh, that I could do that! Surely

when I go to heaven, I shall creep in at the door somehow, while he by grace will be enabled to go boldly in, bringing his sheaves with him." Now stop, poor little faith, stop; thy Master will not deal thus with thee. When thou shalt come to die, thou wilt through his grace feel as much confidence in dying with thy two well-used talents, as thy brother with his ten, for thou wilt, when thou comest there, have thy Lord's sweet presence, and thou wilt say, "I am complete in Christ. Christ's righteousness covers me from head to foot, and now in looking back upon my past life, I can say, Blessed be his holy name. It is little that I could do, but I have done as much as I could for him. I know that he will pardon my defects, and forgive my miscarriages, and I shall never look back upon my humble village charge without much joy, that the Lord allowed me to labor there." And, Oh, methinks, that man will have even a richer commendation in his own conscience, than the man who has been more publicly applauded, for he can say to himself, after putting all his trust in Christ, "Well, I am sure I did not do all this for fame, for I blushed unseen—I have lost my sweetness on the desert air. No one has ever read my deeds; what I did was between myself and my God, and I can render up my account to him and say, 'Lord, I did it for thee, and not to honor myself.'" Yes, friends, I might tell you now of many a score of earnest evangelists in this our land who are working harder than any one of us, and yet win far less honor. Yes, and I could bring you up many a score of city missionaries whose toil for Christ is beyond all measure of praise, who never get much reward here, nay, rather meet with slights and disrespect. You see the poor man start as soon as he goes from his place of worship to-day. He has got three hours this afternoon to go and spend among the sick, and then you will see him on Monday morning. He has to go from house to house, often with the door slammed in his face, often exposed to mobs and drunken men, sometimes jeered and scoffed at, meeting with persons of all religious persuasions and of no persuasion.

He toils on; he has his little evening meeting, and there he

gets a little flock together and tries to pray with them, and he gets now and then a man or a woman converted; but he has no honor. He just takes him off to the minister, and he says, "Sir, here is a good man; I think he is impressed; will you baptize him and receive him into your church?" The minister gets all the credit of that, but as for the poor city missionary, there is little or nothing said of him. There is, perhaps, just his name, Mr. Brown, or Mr. Smith, mentioned sometimes in the report, but people do not think much of him, except, perhaps, as an object of charity they have to keep, whereas he is the man that gives them charity, giving all the sap and blood and marrow of his life for some poor sixty pounds a year, hardly enough to keep his family above want. But he, when he dies, my friend, shall have no less the approval of his conscience than the man who was permitted to stand before the multitudes and raised the nation into excitement on account of religion. He shall come before the Master clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and with unblushing face shall say, "I have received two talents; I have gained beside them two talents more."

Furthermore, and to conclude, you will notice there was no difference in his Master's commendation—none in the reward. In both cases, it was "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Here comes Whitfield, the man who stood before twenty thousand at a time to preach the gospel, who in England, Scotland, Ireland, and America has testified the truth of God, and who could count his converts by thousands, even under one sermon! Here he comes, the man that endured persecution and scorn, and yet was not moved—the man of whom the world was not worthy, who lived for his fellow men, and died at last for their cause; stand by angels and admire, while the Master takes him by the hand and says, "Well done, well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" See how free grace honors the man whom it enabled to do valiantly. Hark! Who is this that comes there? a poor thin-looking creature, that on earth was a consumptive; there was

a hectic flush now and then upon her cheek, and she lay three long years upon her bed of sickness. Was she a prince's daughter, for it seems heaven is making much stir about her? No, she was a poor girl that earned her living by her needle, and she worked herself to death!—Stitch, stitch, stitch, from morning to night! and here she comes. She went prematurely to her grave, but she is coming, like a shock of corn fully ripe, into heaven; and her Master says, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." She takes her place by the side of Whitfield. Ask what she ever did, and you find out that she used to live in some back garret down some dark alley in London; and there used to be another poor girl come to work with her, and that poor girl, when she first came to work with her, was a gay and volatile creature, and this consumptive child told her about Christ; and they used, when she was well enough, to creep out of an evening to go to chapel or to church together. It was hard at first to get the other one to go, but she used to press her lovingly; and when the girl went wild a little, she never gave her up. She used to say, "O Jane, I wish you loved the Saviour;" and when Jane was not there she used to pray for her, and when she was there she prayed with her: and now and then when she was stitching away, read a page out of the Bible to her, for poor Jane could not read. And with many tears she tried to tell her about the Saviour who loved her and gave himself for her. At last, after many a day of hard persuasion, and many an hour of sad disappointment, and many a night of sleepless tearful prayer, at last she lived to see the girl profess her love to Christ; and she left her and took sick, and there she lay till she was taken to the hospital, where she died. When she was in the hospital she used to have a few tracts, and she used to give them to those who came to see her; she would try, if she could, to get the women to come round, and she would give them a tract. When she first went into the hospital, if she could creep out of bed, she used to get by the side of one who was dying, and the nurse used to let her do it; till at last she got too ill, and

then she used to ask a poor woman on the other side of the ward, who was getting better, and was going out, if she would come and read a chapter to her; not that she wanted her to read to her on her own account, but for her sake, for she thought it might strike her heart while she was reading it. At last this poor girl died and fell asleep in Jesus; and the poor consumptive needle-woman had said to her, "Well done" —and what more could an archangel have said to her?—"she hath done what she could."

See, then, the Master's commendation, and the last reward will be equal to all men who have used their talents well. Ah! if there be degrees in glory, they will not be distributed according to our talents, but according to our faithfulness in using them. As to whether there are degrees or not, I know not; but this I know, he that doeth his Lord's will, shall have said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

# SERMON IX.

## THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN.

"But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."—LUKE xv. 20.

ALL persons engaged in education will tell you that they find it far more difficult to make the mind unlearn its errors than to make it receive truth. If we could suppose a man totally ignorant of anything, we should have a fairer chance of instructing him quickly and effectually than we should have had if his mind had been previously stored with falsehood. I have no doubt you, each of you, find it harder to unlearn than to learn. To get rid of old prejudices and preconceived notions is a very hard struggle indeed. It has been well said, that those few words, "I am mistaken," are the hardest in all the English language to pronounce, and certainly it takes very much force to compel us to pronounce them: and after having done so, it is even then difficult to wipe away the slime which an old serpentine error has left upon the heart. Better for us not to have known at all than to have known the wrong thing. Now, I am sure that this truth is never more true than when it applies to God. If I had been let alone to form my notion of God, entirely from Holy Scripture, I feel, that with the assistance of his Holy Spirit it would have been far more easy for me to understand what he is, and how he governs the world, than to learn even the truths of his own Word, after the mind had become perverted by th opinions of others. Why, brethren, who is it that gives a fair representation of God? The Arminian slanders God by accusing him (not in his own intention, but really so) of unfaithfulness; for he teaches that God may promise what he never performs; that he may give eternal life, and promise

that those who have it shall never perish, and yet they may perish after all. He speaks of God as if he were a mutable being, for he talks of his loving men one day, and hating them the next; of his writing their names in the Book of Life one hour, and then erasing their names in the next. And the influence of such an error as that, is very baneful. Many children of God, who have imbibed these errors in early youth, have had to drag along their poor wearied and broken frames for many a day, whereas they might have walked joyfully to heaven if they had known the truth from the beginning. On the other hand, those who hear the Calvinistic preacher, are very apt to misinterpret God. Although we trust we would never speak of God in any other sense than that in which we find him represented in sacred Scripture, yet are we well aware that many of our hearers, even through our assertions, when most guarded, are apt to get rather a caricature of God, than a true picture of him. They imagine that God is a severe being, angry and fierce, very easily to be moved to wrath, but not so easily to be induced to love; they are apt to think of him as one who sits in supreme and lofty state, either totally indifferent to the wishes of his creatures, or else determined to have his own way with them, as an arbitrary Sovereign, never listening to their desires, or compassionating their woes. O that we could unlearn all these fallacies, and believe God to be what he is! O that we could come to Scripture, and there look into that glass which reflects his sacred image, and then receive him as he is, the all-Wise, the all-Just, and yet the all-Gracious, and all-Loving Jehovah! I shall endeavor this morning, by the help of God's Holy Spirit, to represent the lovely character of Christ; and if I shall be happy enough to have some in my audience who are in the position of the prodigal son in the parable—coming to Christ, and yet a great way off from him—I shall trust that they will be led by the same Divine Spirit, to believe in the loving kindness of Jehovah, and so may find peace with God now, ere they leave this house of prayer.

"When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

First, I shall notice the *position* intended in the words, "a great way off;" secondly, I shall notice the *peculiar troubles* which agitate the minds of those, who are in this condition; and then, thirdly, I shall endeavor to teach *the great loving-kindness of our own adorable God*, inasmuch as when we are "a great way off," he runs to us, and embraces us in the arms of his love.

I. First, then, what is the POSITION signified by being 'a great way off?" I must just notice what is *not* that position. It is not the position of the man who is careless and entirely regardless of God; for you notice that the prodigal is represented now as having come to himself, and as returning to his father's house. Though it be true that all sinners are a great way off from God, whether they know it or not, yet in this particular instance, the position of the poor prodigal is intended to signify the character of one, who has been aroused by conviction, who has been led to abhor his former life, and who sincerely desires to return to God. I shall not, then, this morning, specially address the blasphemer, and the profane. To him, there may be some incidental warning heard, but I shall not specially address such a character. It is another person for whom this text is intended: the man who has been a blasphemer, if you please, who may have been a drunkard, and a swearer, and what not, but who has now renounced these things, and is steadfastly seeking after Christ, that he may obtain eternal life. That is the man who is here said to be, though coming to the Lord, "a great way off."

Once again, there is another person who is not intended by this description, namely, the very great man, the Pharisee who thinks himself extremely righteous, and has never learned to confess his sin. You, sir, in your apprehension, are not a great way off. You are so really in the sight of God; you are as far from him as light from darkness, as the east is from the west; but you are not spoken of here. You are like the prodigal son, only that instead of spending your life righteously, you have run away from your Father, and hidden in the earth the gold which he gave you, and are able to feed upon the husks which swine do eat, whilst by a miserable economy

of good works you are hoping to save enough of your fortune to support yourself here and in eternity. Your hope of self-salvation is a fallacy, and you are not addressed in the words of the text. It is the man who knows himself lost, but desires to be saved, who is here declared to be met by God, and received with affectionate embraces.

And now we come to the question, Who is the man, and why is he said to be a great way off? For he seems to be very near the kingdom, now that he knows his need and is seeking the Saviour. I reply, in the first place, he is a great way off in his own apprehensions. You are here this morning, and you have an idea that never was man so far from God as you are. You look back upon your past life, and you recollect how you have slighted God, despised his Sabbath, neglected his Book, trampled upon the blood of sprinkling, and rejected all the invitations of his mercy. You turn over the pages of your history, and you remember the sins which you have committed—the sins of your youth and your former transgressions, the crimes of your manhood, and the riper sins of your older years; like black waves dashing upon a dark shore, they roll in wave upon wave, upon your poor troubled memory. There comes a little wave of your childish folly, and over that there leaps one of your youthful transgressions, and over the head of this there comes a very Atlantic billow of your manhood's transgressions. At the sight of them you stand astonished and amazed. "O Lord my God, how deep is the gulf which divides me from thyself, and where is the power that can bridge it? I am separated from thee by leagues of sin, whole mountains of my guilt are piled upward between me and thyself. O God, shouldest thou destroy me now, thou wouldest be just; and if thou dost ever bring me to thyself, it must be nothing less than a power as Omnipotent as that which made the world, which can ever do it. O! how far am I from God!"

Some of you would be startled this morning, if your neighbors were to give you revelations of their own feelings. If yonder man standing there in the crowd could come into this pulpit, and tell you what he now feels, you might perhaps be

horrified at his description of his own heart. How many of you have no notion of the way in which a soul is cut and hacked about, when it is under the convictions of the law! If you should hear the man tell out what he feels, you would say, "Ah! he is a poor deluded enthusiast; men are not so bad as that;" or else you would be apt to think he had committed some nameless crime which he dare not mention, that was preying on his conscience. Nay, sir, he has been as moral and upright as you have been; but should he describe himself as he now discovers himself to be, he would shock you utterly. And yet you are the same, though you feel it not, and would indignantly deny it. When the light of God's grace comes into your heart, it is something like the opening of the windows of an old cellar that has been shut up for many days. Down in that cellar, which has not been opened for many months, are all kinds of loathsome creatures, and a few sickly plants blanched by the darkness. The walls are dark and damp with the trail of reptiles; it is a horrid filthy place, in which no one would willingly enter. You may walk there in the dark very securely, and except now and then for the touch of some slimy creature, you would not believe the place was so bad and filthy. Open those shutters, clean a pane of glass, let a little light in, and now see how a thousand noxious things have made this place their habitation. Sure, 'twas not the light that made this place so horrible, but it was the light that showed how horrible it was before. So let God's grace just open a window and let the light into a man's soul, and he will stand astonished to see at what a distance he is from God. Yes, sir, to-day you think yourself second to none but the Eternal; you fancy that you can approach his throne with steady step; it is but a little that you have to do to be saved; you imagine that you can accomplish it at any hour, and save yourself upon your dying bed as well as now. Ah! sir, if you could but be touched by Ithuriel's wand, and made to be in appearance what you are in reality, then you would see that you are far enough from God even now, and so far from him that unless the arms of his grace were stretched out to bring you to himself, you must perish in your sin. Now I

turn my eye again with hope, and trust I have not a few in this large assembly who can say, "Sir, I feel I am far from God, and sometimes I fear I am so far from him that he will never have mercy upon me; I dare not lift so much as my eyes towards heaven; I smite on my breast, and say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner.'" Oh! poor heart; here is a comforting passage for thee: "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion on him."

But again, there is a second sense in which some now present may feel themselves to be far off from God. Conscience tells every man that if he would be saved he must get rid of his sin. The Antinomian may possibly pretend to believe that men can be saved while they live in sin; but conscience will never allow any man to swallow so egregious a lie as that. I have not one person in this congregation who is not perfectly assured that if he is to be saved he must leave off his drunkenness and his vices. Sure there is not one here so stupefied with the laudanum of hellish indifference as to imagine that he can revel in his lusts, and afterwards wear the white robe of the redeemed in paradise. If ye imagine ye can be partakers of the blood of Christ, and yet drink the cup of Belial; if ye imagine that ye can be members of Satan and members of Christ at the same time, ye have less sense than one would give you credit for. No, you know that right arms must be cut off, and right eyes plucked out—that the most darling sins must be renounced, if ye would enter into the kingdom of God. And I have a man here who is convinced of the unholiness of his life, and he has striven to reform, not because he thinks reformation would save him, for he knows better than that, but because he knows that this is one of the first-fruits of grace—reformation from sin. Well, poor man, he has for many years been an inveterate drunkard, and he struggles now to overcome the passion. He has almost effected it; but he never had such an Herculean labor to attempt before; for now some temptation comes upon him so strongly that it is as much as he can do to stand against it; and perhaps sometimes since his first conviction of sin he has even fallen into it. Or perhaps it is another vice, and you,

my brother, have set your face against it; but there are many bonds and fetters that bind us to our vices, and you find that though it was easy enough to spin the warp and woof of sin together, it is not so easy to unravel that which you have spun. You can not purge your house of your idols; you do not yet know how to give up all your lustful pleasures. Not yet can you renounce the company of the ungodly. You have cut off one by one your most intimate acquaintances, but it is very hard to do it completely, and you are struggling to accomplish it, and you often fall on your knees and cry, "O, Lord, how far I am from thee! what high steps these are which I have to climb! Oh! how can I be saved? Sure, if I can not purge myself from my old sins, I shall never be able to hold on my way; and even should I get rid of them, I should plunge into them once more." You are crying out, "Oh, how great my distance from God! Lord, bring me near!"

Let me present you with one other aspect of our distance from God. You have read your Bibles, and you believe that faith alone can unite the soul to Christ. You feel that unless you can believe in him who died upon the cross for your sins, you can never see the kingdom of God; but you can say this morning, "Sir, I have striven to believe; I have searched the Scriptures, not hours, but days together, to find a promise on which my weary foot might rest; I have been upon my knees many and many a time, earnestly supplicating a Divine blessing; but though I have pleaded, all in vain I have urged my plea, for until now no whisper have I had of grace, no token for good, no sign of mercy. Sir, I have striven to believe, and I have said,

> "O could I but believe
> Then all would easy be;
> I would, but can not—Lord, relieve,
> My help must come from thee!"

I have used all the power I have, and have desperately striven to cast myself at the Saviour's feet and see my sins washed away in his blood. I have not been indifferent to the story

of the cross; I have read it a hundred times, and even wept over it; but when I strive to put my hand upon the scapegoat's head, and labor to believe that my sins are transferred to him, some demon seems to stop the breath that would breathe itself forth in adoration, and something checks the hand that would lay itself upon the head that died for me." Well, poor soul, thou art indeed far from God. I will repeat the words of the text to thee. May the Holy Spirit repeat them in thine ear! "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." So shall it be with thee if thou hast come thus far, though great may be the distance, thy feet shall not have to travel it, but God, the Eternal One, shall from his throne look down and visit thy poor heart, though now thou tarriest by the way, afraid to approach him.

II. Our second point is the PECULIAR TROUBLES which agitate the breasts of those who are in this position. Let us introduce to you the poor ragged prodigal. After a life of ease, he is, by his own vice, plunged into penury and labor. After feeding swine for a time, and being almost starved, he sets about returning to his father's house. It is a long and weary journey. He walks many a mile, until his feet are sore, and at last, from the summit of a mountain, he views his father's house far away in the plain. There are yet many miles between him and his father whom he has neglected. Can you conceive his emotions when, for the first time after so long an absence, he sees the old house at home? He remembers it well in the distance, for though it is long since he trod its floors, he has never ceased to recollect it; and the remembrance of his father's kindness, and of his own prosperity when he was with him, has never yet been erased from his consciousness. You would imagine that for one moment he feels a flash of joy, like some flash of lightning in the midst of the tempest, but anon a black darkness comes over his spirit. In the first place, it is probable he will think, "Oh! suppose I could reach my home, will my father receive me? Will he not shut the door in my face and tell me begone and spend the rest of my life where I have been spending the first of it?"

Then another suggestion might arise: "Surely, the demon that led me first astray may lead me back again, before I salute my parent." "Or mayhap," thought he, "I may even die upon the road, and so, before I have received my father's blessing, my soul may stand before its God." I doubt not each of these three thoughts has crossed your mind if you are now in the position of one who is seeking Christ, but mourns to feel himself far away from him.

First, you have been afraid lest you should die before Christ has appeared to you. You have been for months seeking the Saviour without finding him, and now the black thought comes, "And what if I should die with all these prayers unanswered? Oh! if he would but hear me ere I departed this world I would be content, though he should keep me waiting in anguish for many years. But what, if before to-morrow morning I should be a corpse? At my bed I kneel to-night and cry for mercy. Oh! if he should not send the pardon before to-morrow morning, and in the night my spirit should stand before his bar!—What then?" It is singular that other men think they shall live for ever, but men convinced of sin, who seek a Saviour, are afraid they shall not live another moment. You have known the time, dear Christian brethren, when you dared not shut your eyes for fear you should not open them again on earth; when you dreaded the shadows of the night lest they should darken for ever the light of the sun, and you should dwell in outer darkness throughout eternity. You have mourned as each day has entered, and you have wept as it has departed, because you fancied that your next step might precipitate you into your eternal doom. I have known what it is to tread the earth and fear lest every tuft of grass should but cover a door to hell; trembling, lest every particle, and every atom, and every stone, should be so at league with God against me, as to destroy me. John Bunyan says, that at one time in his experience, he felt that he had rather have been born a dog or a toad than a man; he felt so unutterably wretched on account of sin; and his great point of wretchedness was the fact, that though he had been three years seeking Christ, he might after

all die without finding him. And in truth, this is no needless alarm. It may be perhaps too alarming to some who already feel their need of Christ, but the mass of us need perpetually to be startled with the thought of death. How few of you ever indulge that thought! Because ye live and are in health, and eat, and drink, and sleep, ye think ye shall not die. Do ye ever soberly look at your last end? Do ye ever, when ye come to your beds at night, think how one day ye shall undress for the last slumber? And when ye wake in the morning, do ye never think that the trump of the archangel shall startle you to appear before God in the last day of the great assize, wherein an universe shall stand before the Judge? No. "All men think all men mortal but themselves;" and thoughts of death we still push off, until at last we shall find ourselves waking up in torment, where to wake is to wake too late. But thou to whom I specially speak this morning, thou who feelest that thou art a great way off from Christ, thou shalt never die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord; if thou hast really sought him, thou shalt never die until thou hast found him. There was never a soul yet, that sincerely sought the Saviour, who perished before he found him. No; the gates of death shall never shut on thee till the gates of grace have opened for thee; till Christ has washed thy sins away thou shalt never be baptized in Jordan's flood. Thy life is secure, for this is God's constant plan—he keeps his own elect alive till the day of his grace, and then he takes them to himself. And inasmuch as thou knowest thy need of a Saviour, thou art one of his, and thou shalt never die until thou hast found him.

Your second fear is, "Ah, sir! I am not afraid of dying before I find Christ, I have a worse fear than that; I have had convictions before, and they have often passed away; my greatest fear to-day is, that these will be the same." I have heard of a poor collier, who on one occasion, having been deeply impressed under a sermon, was led to repent of sin and forsake his former life; but he felt so great horror of ever returning to his former conversation, that one day he knelt down and cried thus unto God, "O Lord, let me die on this

spot, rather than ever deny the religion which I have espoused, and turn back to my former conversation :" and we are credibly told, that he died on that very spot, and so his prayer was answered. God had rather take him home to heaven than suffer him to bear the brunt of temptation on earth. Now, when men come to Christ, they feel that they had rather suffer anything than lose their convictions. Scores of times have you and I been drawn to Christ under the preaching of the Word. We can look back upon dozens of occasions on which it seemed just the turning point with us. Something said in our hearts, "Now, believe in Christ, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." But we said, "To-morrow, to-morrow ;" and when to-morrow came our convictions were gone. We thought what we said yesterday would be the deed of to-day ; but instead of it, the procrastination of yesterday became the hardened wickedness of to-day: we wandered farther from God and forgot him. Now you are crying to him for fear, lest he should give you up again. You have this morning prayed before you came here, and you said, "Father, suffer not my companions to laugh me out of my religion ; let not my worldly business so engross my thoughts, as to prevent my due attention to the matters of another world. Oh, let not the trifles of to-day so absorb my thoughts that I may not be preparing myself to meet my God—

'Deeply on my thoughtful heart,
Eternal things impress,'

and make this a real saving work that shall never die out, nor be taken from me." Is that your earnest prayer? O poor prodigal, it shall be heard, it shall be answered. Thou shalt not have time to go back. To-day thy Father views thee from his throne in heaven ; to-day he runs to thee in the message of his gospel ; to-day he falls upon thy neck and weeps for joy ; to-day he says to thee, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven ;" to-day, by the preaching of the Word, he bids thee come and reason with him, "for though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool, though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow."

But the last and the most prominent thought which I suppose the prodigal would have, would be, that when he did get to his father, he would say to him, "Get along with you, I will have nothing more to do with you." "Ah!" thought he to himself, "I recollect the morning, when I rose up before day-break, because I knew I could not stand my mother's tears; I remember how I crept down the back staircase and took all the money with me, how I stole down the yard and ran away into the land where I spent my all. Oh! what will the old gentlemen say of me when I come back? Why, there he is! he is running to me. But he has got a horsewhip with him, to be sure, to whip me away. It is not at all possible that if he comes he will have a kind word for me. The most I can expect is that he will say, 'Well John, you have wasted all your money, you can not expect me to do anything for you again. I won't let you starve; you shall be one of my servants: there, come, I will take you as footman;' and if he will do that I will be obliged to him; nay, that is the very thing I will ask of him; I will say, 'Make me as one of thy hired servants.'" "Oh," said the devil within him, "your father will never speak comfortably to you: you had better run away again. I tell you if he gets near you, you will have such a dressing as you never received in your life. You will die with a broken heart; you will very likely fall dead here; the old man will never bury you; the carrion crows will eat you. There is no hope for you: see how you have treated him. Put yourself in his place: what would you do if you had a son that had run away with half your living, and spent it upon harlots?" And the son thought if he were in his father's place he should be very harsh and severe; and possibly, he almost turned upon his heel to run away. But he had not time to do that. When he was just thinking about running away, on a sudden his father's arms were about his neck, and he had received the paternal kiss. Nay, before he could get his whole prayer finished, he was arrayed in a white robe, the best in the house; and they had brought him to the table, and the fatted calf was being killed for his repast. And poor soul, it shall be so with you. Thou sayest, "If I

go to God, he will never receive me. I am too vile and wretched: others he may have pressed to his heart, but he will not me. If my brother should go, he might be saved; but there are such aggravations in my crime; I have grown so old since; I have done such a deal of mischief; I have so often blasphemed him, so frequently broken his Sabbaths; ah! and I have so often deceived him; I have promised I would repent, and when I got well I have lied to God, and gone back to my old sin. Oh, if he would but let me creep inside the door of heaven! I will not ask to be one of his children; I will only ask that he will let me be where the Syro-Phœnician woman desired to be—to be a dog, to eat the crumbs that fall from the Master's table. That is all I ask; and oh! if he will but grant it to me, he shall never hear the last of it, for as long as I live I will sing his praise; and when the world doth fade away, and the sun grow dim with age, my gratitude, immortal as my soul, shall never cease to sing his love, who pardoned my grossest sins and washed me in his blood." It shall be so. Come and try. Now, sinners, dry your tears; let hopeless sorrows cease; look to the wounds of Christ, who died; let all your griefs now be removed, there is no further cause for them; your Father loves you; he accepts and receives you to his heart.

III. Now, in conclusion, I may notice HOW THESE FEARS WERE MET IN THE PRODIGAL'S CASE, and how they shall be met in ours if we are in the same condition.

The text says, "The Father saw him." Yes, and God saw thee just now. That tear which was wiped away so hastily—as if thou wast ashamed of it—God saw it, and he stored it in his bottle. That prayer which thou didst breathe just a few moments ago, so faintly, and with such little faith—God heard it. The other day thou wast in thy chamber, where no ear heard thee; but God was there. Sinner, let this be thy comfort, that God sees thee when thou beginnest to repent. He does not see thee with his usual gaze, with which he looks on all men; but he sees thee with an eye of intense interest. He has been looking on thee in all thy sin, and in all thy sorrow, hoping that thou wouldst repent; and now he sees the first

gleam of grace, and he beholds it with joy. Never warder on the lonely castle top saw the first grey light of morning with more joy than that with which God beholds the first desire in thy heart. Never physician rejoiced more when he saw the first heaving of the lungs in one that was supposed to be dead, than God doth rejoice over thee, now that he sees the first token for good. Think not that thou art despised, and unknown, and forgotten. He is marking thee from his high throne in glory, and rejoicing in what he sees. He saw thee pray, he heard thee groan; he marked thy tear; he looked upon thee and rejoiced to see that these were the first seeds of grace in thine heart.

And then, the text says, "he had compassion on him." He did not merely see him, but he wept within himself to think he should be in such a condition. The old father had a very long range of eye-sight; and though the prodigal could not see him in the distance, he could see the prodigal. And the father's first thought when he saw him was this—"O my poor son, O my poor boy! that ever he should have brought himself into such a state as this!" He looked through his telescope of love, and he saw him, and said, "Ah! he did not go out of my house in such trim as that. Poor creature, his feet are bleeding; he has come a long way, I'll be bound. Look at his face, he doesn't look like the same boy he was when he left me. His eye that was so bright, is now sunken in its socket; his cheeks that once stood out with fatness, have now become hollow with famine. Poor wretch, I can tell all his bones, he is so emaciated." Instead of feeling any anger in his heart, he felt just the contrary; he felt such pity for his poor son. And so the Lord feels for you—you that are groaning and moaning on account of sin. He forgets your sins; he only weeps to think you should have brought yourself to be what you are: "Why didst thou rebel against me, and bring thyself into such a state as this?" It was just like that day when Adam sinned. God walked in the garden, and he missed Adam. He did not cry out, "Adam, come here and be judged!" No; with a soft, sorrowful, and plaintive voice, he said, "Adam, where art thou? Oh, my fair Adam, thou whom

I made so happy, where art thou now? Oh, Adam! thou didst think to become a God; where art thou now? Thou hast walked with me: dost thou hide thyself from thy friend? Little dost thou know, O Adam, what woes thou hast brought on thyself, and thine offspring. Adam, where art thou?" And Jehovah's bowels yearn to-day over you. He is not angry with you; his anger is passed away, and his hands are stretched out still. Inasmuch as he has brought you to feel that you have sinned against him, and to desire reconciliation with him, there is no wrath in his heart. The only sorrow that he feels is sorrow that you should have brought yourself into a state so mournful as that in which you now are found.

But he did not stop in mere compassion. Having had compassion, "he ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." This you do not understand yet; but you shall. As sure as God is God, if you this day are seeking him aright through Christ, the day shall come when the kiss of full assurance shall be on your lip, when the arms of sovereign love shall embrace you, and you shall know it to be so. Thou mayest have despised him, but thou shalt know him yet to be thy Father and thy Friend. Thou mayest have scoffed his name: thou shalt one day come to rejoice in it as better than pure gold. Thou mayest have broken his Sabbaths and despised his Word; the day is coming when the Sabbath shall be thy delight, and his Word thy treasure. Yes, marvel not; thou mayest have plunged into the kennel of sin, and made thy clothes black with iniquity; but thou shalt one day stand before his throne white as the angels be; and that tongue that once cursed him shall yet sing his praise. If thou be a real seeker, the hands that have been stained with lust shall one day grasp the harp of gold, and the head that has plotted against the Most High shall yet be girt with gold. Seemeth it not a strange thing that God should do so much for sinners? But strange though it seem, it shall be strangely true. Look at the staggering drunkard in the ale-house. Is there a possibility that one day he shall stand among the fairest sons of light? Possibility! ay, certainty, if he repents and turns from the error of his ways. Hear you yon curser and swearer? See you the man

who labels himself as a servant of hell, and is not ashamed to do so? Is it possible that he shall one day share the bliss of the redeemed? Possible! ay, more, it is sure, if he turneth from his evil ways. O sovereign grace, turn men that they may repent! "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

"Lord, do thou the sinner turn,
For thy tender mercy's sake."

# SERMON X.

## GOD, THE ALL-SEEING ONE.

"Hell and destruction are before the Lord: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?"—PROVERBS xv. 11.

You have often smiled at the ignorance of heathens who bow themselves before gods of wood and stone. You have quoted the words of Scripture, and you have said, "Eyes have they, but they see not; ears have they, but they hear not." You have therefore argued that they could not be gods at all, because they could neither see nor hear, and you have smiled contemptuously at the men who could so debase their understandings as to make such things objects of adoration. May I ask you one question—but one? Your God can both see and hear: would your conduct be in any respect different, if you had a god such as those that the heathen worship? Suppose for one minute, that Jehovah, who is nominally adored in this land, could be (though it is almost blasphemy to suppose it) smitten with such a blindness, that he could not see the works and know the thoughts of man: would you then become more careless concerning him than you are now? I trow not. In nine cases out of ten, and perhaps in a far larger and sadder proportion, the doctrine of Divine Omniscience, although it is received and believed, has no practical effect upon our lives at all. The mass of mankind forget God: whole nations who know his existence and believe that he beholds them, live as if they had no God at all. Merchants, farmers, men in their shops, and in their fields, husbands in their families, and wives in the midst of their households, live as if there were no God; no eye inspecting them; no ear listening to the voice of their lips, and no eternal mind always treasuring up the recollection of their acts.

Ah! we are practical Atheists, the mass of us; yea, all but those that have been born again, and have passed from death unto life, be their creeds what they may, are Atheists, after all, in life; for if there were no God, and no hereafter, multitudes of men would never be affected by the change; they would live the same as they do now—their lives being so full of disregard of God and his ways, that the absence of a God could not affect them in any great degree. Permit me, then, this morning, as God shall help me, to stir up your hearts; and may God grant that something I may say, may drive some of your practical Atheism out of you. I would endeavor to set before you, God, the all-seeing one, and press upon your solemn consideration the tremendous fact, that in all our acts, in all our ways, and in all our thoughts, we are continually under his observing eye.

We have in our text, first of all, *a great fact declared*,—"Hell and destruction are before the Lord;" we have, secondly, *a great fact inferred*,—"How much more then the hearts of the children of men?"

I. We will begin with THE GREAT FACT WHICH IS DECLARED—a fact which furnishes us with premises from which we deduce the practical conclusion of the second sentence—"How much more then the hearts of the children of men?" The best interpretation that you can give of those two words, "hell" and "destruction," is, I think, comprehended in a sentence something like this,—"*Death and hell are before the Lord.*" The separate state of departed spirits, and destruction, *Abaddon*, as the Hebrew has it, the place of torment, are both of them, although solemnly mysterious to us, manifest enough to God.

1. First, then, the word here translated "hell," might just as well be translated "death," or the state of departed spirits. Now, death, with all its solemn consequences, is visible before the Lord. Between us and the hereafter of departed spirits a great black cloud is hanging. Here and there, the Holy Spirit hath made chinks, as it were, in the black wall of separation, through which, by faith we can see; for he hath "revealed unto us by the Spirit" the things which "eye hath

not seen nor ear heard," and which the human intellect could never compass. Yet, what we know is but very little. When men die, they pass beyond the realm of our knowledge: both in body and in soul, they go beyond our understandings. But God understands all the secrets of death. Let us divide these into several heads, and enumerate them.

God knows the burial-places of all his people. He notes as well the resting-place of the man who is buried tombless and alone, as the man over whom a mighty mausoleum has been raised. The traveler who fell in the barren desert, whose body became the prey of the vulture, and whose bones were bleached in the sun—the mariner, who was wrecked far out at sea, and over whose corpse no dirge was ever wailed, except the howling of the winds, and the murmuring of the wild waves—the thousands who have perished in battle, unnumbered and unnoticed—the many who have died alone, amid dreary forests, frozen seas, and devouring snow-storms—all these, and the places of their sepulchre, are known to God. That silent grot within the sea, where pearls lie deep, where now the shipwrecked one is sleeping, is marked by God as the death-place of one of his redeemed; that place upon the mountain-side, the deep ravine into which the traveler fell and was buried in a snow-drift, is marked in the memory of God as the tomb of one of the human race. No body of man, however it may have been interred or uninterred, has passed beyond the range of God's knowledge. Blessed be his name, if I shall die, and lie where the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep, in some neglected corner of the churchyard, I shall be known as well, and rise as well recognized by my glorious Father, as if interred in the cathedral, where forests of gothic pillars proudly stand erect, and where the songs of myriads perpetually salute high heaven. I shall be known as well as if I had been buried there in solemn pomp, and had been interred with music and with dread solemnities, and I shall be recognised as well as if the marble trophy and the famous pillar had been raised to my remembrance; for God knoweth no such thing as forgetfulness of the burying-places of his children. Moses sleeps in some spot that eye hath not seen

God kissed away his soul, and he buried him where Israel could never find him, though they may have searched for him. But God knoweth where Moses sleeps; and if he knows that, he understands where all his children are hidden. Ye cannot tell me where is the tomb of Adam; ye could not point out to me the sleeping place of Abel. Is any man able o discover the tomb of Methuselah and those long-lived dwellers in the time before the flood? Who shall tell where the once-treasured body of Joseph now sleeps in faith? Can any of you discover the tombs of the kings, and mark the exact spot where David and Solomon rest in solitary grandeur? No, those things have passed from human recollection, and we know not where the great and mighty of the past are buried; but God knoweth, for death and Hades are open before the Lord.

And again, further, not only does he know the place where they were buried, but he is cognizant of the history of all their bodies after sepulture or after death. It has often been asked by the infidel, "How can the body of man be restored, when it may have been eaten by the cannibal, or devoured by wild beasts?" Our simple reply is, that God can track every atom of it if he pleases. We do not think it necessary to resurrection that he should do so, but if he so willed it, he could bring every atom of every body that hath ever died: although it hath passed through the most complicated machinery of nature, and become entangled in its passage with plants and beasts, yea, and with the bodies of other men, God hath it still within the range of his knowledge to know where every atom is, and it is within the might of his Omnipotence to call every atom from its wandering, and restore it to its proper sphere, and rebuild the body of which it was a part. It is true, we could not track the dust that ong since has moldered. Buried with exactest care, preserved with the most scrupulous reverence, years passed away, and the body of the monarch, which had long slept well guarded and protected, was at last reached by the careless hand. The coffin had moldered, and the metal was broken for the sake of its own value; a handful of dust was discover-

ed, the last relics of one who was master of many nations. That dust by sacrilegious hand was cast in the aisle of the church, or thrown into the churchyard and blown by the winds into the neighboring field. It was impossible for ever to preserve it; the greatest care was defeated; and at last the monarch was on a level with his slave, "alike unknowing and unknown." But God knows where every particle of the handful of dust has gone: he has marked in his book the wandering of every one of its atoms. He hath death so open before his view, that he can bring all these together, bone to bone, and clothe them with the very flesh that robed them in the days of yore, and make them live again. Death is open before the Lord.

And as the body, so the soul when separated from the body is before the Lord. We look upon the countenance of our dying friend, and on a sudden a mysterious change passes over his frame. "His soul has fled," we say. But have we any idea of what his soul is? Can we form even a conjecture of what the flying of that soul may be, and what the august presence into which it is ushered when it is disentangled from its earthly coil? Is it possible for us to guess what is that state where spirits without bodies, perpetually blest, behold their God? It is possible for us to compass some imagination of what heaven is to be, when bodies and souls, reunited, shall before God's throne enjoy the highest bliss; but I do think, that so gross are our conceptions, whilst we are in our bodies, that it is almost, if not quite, impossible for any of us to form any idea whatever as to the position of souls, whilst in the disembodied state, between the hour of death and the time of resurrection.

> "This much, and this is all, we know,
> They are supremely blest:
> Have done with sin, and care, and woe,
> And with their Saviour rest."

But the best of the saints can tell us nothing more than this. They are blest, and in paradise they are reigning with their Lord. Brethren, these things are known to God. The sepa-

rate state of the dead, the heaven of disembodied spirits, is within the gaze of the Most High, and at this hour, if so he pleased, he could reveal to us the condition of every man that is dead—whether he has mounted to Elysian fields, to dwell for ever in the sunlight of his Master's countenance, or has been plunged into hell, dragged down by iron chains, to wait in dreary woe the result of the awful trial, when "Depart ye cursed," must be the re-affirmation of a sentence once pronounced, and already in part endured. God understands the separate doom of every man's spirit before the great tribunal day—before the last sentence shall have been pronounced, death is open before the Lord.

2. The next word, "*destruction*," signifies hell, or the place of the damned. That also is open before the Lord. Where hell is, and what its miseries, we know not; except "through a glass darkly," we have never seen the invisible things of horror. That land of terror is a land unknown. We have much reason to thank God that he has put it so far off from the habitations of living mortals, that the pains, the groans, the shrieks, the yells, are not to be heard here, or else earth itself would have become a hell, the solemn prelude and the ante-past of unutterable torment. God has put somewhere, far on the edge of his dominions, a fearful lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; into that he cast the rebel angels, who (though by a license they are now allowed to walk the earth) do carry a hell within their bosoms, and are by-and-by to be bound with chains, reserved in blackness and darkness for ever for them that kept not their first estate, but lifted the arm of their rebellion against God. Into that place we dare not look. Perhaps it would not be possible for any man to get a fair idea of the torments of the lost, without at once becoming mad. Reason would reel at such a sight of horror. One moment of listening to the shrill screams of spirits tortured, might forever drive us into the depths of despair, and make us only fit to be bound in chains whilst we lived on earth. Raving lunatics surely we must become. But whilst God has mercifully covered all these things from us, they are all known to him; he looks upon them; yea, it is his look that

makes hell what it is. His eyes, full of fury, flash the lightnings that scathe his enemies; his lips, full of dreadful thunders, make the thunders that now affright the wicked. O! could they escape the eye of God, could they shut out that dreary vision of the face of the incensed Majesty of heaven, then might hell be quenched; then might the wheels of Ixion stand still; then might doomed Tantalus quench his thirst and eat to his very full. But there, whilst they lie in their chains, they look upward, and they see ever that fearful vision of the Most High; the dreadful hands that grasp the thunderbolts, the dreadful lips that speak the thunders, and the fearful eyes that flash the flames that burn their souls, with horrors deeper than despair. Yes, hell, horrible as it is, and veiled in many clouds, and covered over with darkness, is naked before the vision of the Most High.

There is the grand fact stated—"Hell and destruction are before the Lord." After this the inference seems to be easy —"How much more then the hearts of the children of men?"

II. We now come to the GREAT FACT INFERRED.

In briefly entering upon this second part I will discuss the subject thus: You notice there an argument—"How much more then the hearts of the children of men?" I will therefore begin by asking, why does it follow that the hearts of men are seen by God? *Why—how—what—when*—shall be four questions into which we shall divide what we have now to say.

1. *Why* is it so clear, that "if hell and destruction are open before the Lord," the hearts of men must be very plainly viewed by him?

We answer, because the hearts of men are not so extensive as the realms of death and torment. What is man's heart? what is man's self? Is he not in Scripture compared to a grasshopper? Does not God declare that he "takes up the isles"—whole islands full of men—"as a very little thing And the nations before him are but as the drop of a bucket?" If, then, the all-seeing eye of God takes in at one glance the wide regions of death—and wide they are, wide enough to startle any man who shall try to range them through—if, I

say, with one glance God seeth death and seeth hell through, with all its bottomless depths, with all its boundlessness of misery, surely, then, he is quite able to behold all the actions of the little thing called man's heart. Suppose a man so wise as to be able to know the wants of a nation and to remember the feelings of myriads of men, you can not suppose it difficult for him to know the actions of his own family and to understand the emotions of his own household. If the man is able to stretch his arm over a great sphere, and to say, "I am monarch of all this," surely he shall be able to control the less. He who in his wisdom can walk through centuries shall not say that he is ignorant of the history of a year; he who can dive into the depths of science, and understand the history of the whole world from its creation, is not to be alarmed by some small riddle that happens at his own door. No, the God who seeth death and hell seeth our hearts, for they are far less extensive.

Reflect again, that they are far less aged too. Death is an ancient monarch; he is the only king whose dynasty stands fast. Ever since the days of Adam he has never been succeeded by another, and has never had an interregnum in his reign. His black ebon sceptre hath swept away generation after generation; his scythe hath mowed the fair fields of this earth a hundred times, and is sharp to mow us down, and when another crop shall succeed us he is still ready to devour the multitudes, and sweep the earth clean again. The regions of death are old domains; his pillars of black granite are ancient as the eternal hills. Death made his prey on earth long ere Adam was here. Those mighty creatures that made the deep hoary with their strength, and stirred the earth with their tramplings—those elder born of nature's sons, the mighty creatures that lived here long ere Adam walked in Eden—death made them his prey: like a mighty hunter he speared the mighty lizard and laid it low, and now we dig it from the stony tomb, and wonder at it. He is our ancient monarch; but ancient as he is, his whole monarchy is in the records of God, and until death itself is dead, and swallowed up in victory, death shall be open before the Lord. How old, too, is

—old as the first sin. In that day when Satan tempted the angels, and led astray the third part of the stars of heaven, then hell was digged; then was that bottomless pit first struck out of solid rocks of vengeance, that it might stand a marvelous record of what God's wrath can do. The fires of hell are not the kindlings of yesterday: they are ancient flames that burned long ere Vesuvius cast forth its lurid flame. Long ere the first charred ashes fell upon the plain from earth's red volcanoes, hell's flames were burning; for "Tophet is prepared of old, the pile thereof is wood and much smoke; the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it. If, then, the ancient things, these old ones, death and hell, have been observed by God, and if their total history is known to him, how much more then shall he know the history of those mere animalculæ, those ephemera of an hour, that we call men! You are here to-day, and gone to-morrow; born yesterday—the next hour shall see our tomb prepared, and another minute shall hear, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust," and the falling of the clod upon the coffin lid. We are the creatures of a day, and know nothing. We are scarcely here; we are only living and dead. "Gone!" is the greatest part of our history. Scarcely have we time enough to tell the story, ere it comes to its finis. Surely, then, God may easily understand the history of a beast, when he knows the history of the monarchies of death and hell.

This is the *why*. I need not give further arguments, though there be abundance deducible from the text. "How much more then the hearts of the children of men?"

2. But now, *how* does God know the heart? I mean to what degree and to what extent does he understand and know that which is in man? I answer, Holy Scripture in divers places gives us most precise information. God knows the heart so well that he is said to "search" it. We all understand the figure of a search. There is a search-warrant out against some man who is supposed to be harboring a traitor in his house. The officer goes into the lower room, opens the door of every cupboard, looks into every closet, peers into every cranny, takes the key, descends into the cellar, turns over the

coals, disturbs the wood, lest any one should be hidden there Up stairs he goes: there is an old room that has not been open for years,—it is opened. There is a huge chest: the lock is forced, and it is broken open. The very top of the house is searched, lest upon the slates or upon the tiles some one should be concealed. At last, when the search has been complete, the officer says, "It is impossible that there can be anybody here, for, from the tiles to the foundation, I have searched the house thoroughly through; I know the very spiders well, for I have seen the house completely." Now, it is just so that God knows our heart. He searches it—searches into every nook, corner, crevice, and secret part; and the figure of the Lord is pushed further still. "The candle of the Lord," we are told, "searches the secret parts of the belly." As when we wish to find something, we take a candle, and look down upon the ground with great care, and turn up the dust. If it is some little piece of money we desire to find, we light a candle and sweep the house, and search diligently till we find it. Even so it is with God. He searches Jerusalem with candles, and pulls every thing to day-light. No partial search, like that of Laban, when he went into Rachel's tent to look for his idols. She put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them; but God looks into the camel's furniture, and all. "Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord." His eye searches the heart, and looks into every part of it.

In another passage we are told that God tries the reins. That is even more than searching. The goldsmith when he takes gold, looks at it, and examines it carefully. "Ah!" says he, "but I don't understand this gold yet: I must try it." He thrusts it into the furnace; there coals are heaped upon it, and it is fused and melted, till he knows what there is of dross, and what there is of gold. Now, God knows to the very carat how much there is of sound gold in us, and how much of dross. There is no deceiving him. He has put our hearts into the furnace of his Omniscience; the furnace—his knowledge—tries us as completely as the goldsmith's crucible doth try the gold—how much there is of hypocrisy, how

much of truth—how much of sham, how much of real—how much of ignorance, how much of knowledge—how much of devotion, how much of blasphemy—how much of carefulness, how much of carelessness. God knows the ingredients of the heart; he reduces the soul to its pristine metals; he divides it asunder—so much of quartz, so much of gold, so much of dung, of dross, of wood, of hay, of stubble, so much of gold, silver, and precious stones. "The Lord trieth the hearts and searcheth the reins of the children of men."

Here is another description of God's knowledge of the heart. In one place of Sacred Writ—(it will be well if you set your children to find out these places at home)—God is said to ponder the heart. Now, you know, the Latin word *ponder* means *weigh*. The Lord weighs the heart. Old Master Quarles has got a picture of a great one putting a heart into one scale, and then putting the law, the Bible, into the other scale, to weigh it. This is what God does with men's hearts. They are often great, puffed-up, blown-out things, and people say, "What a great-hearted man that is!" But God does not judge by the appearance of a man's great heart, nor the outside appearance of a good heart; but he puts it in the scales and weighs it—puts his own Word in one scale and the heart in the other. He knows the exact weight—knows whether we have grace in the heart, which makes us good weight, or only pretence in the heart, which makes us weigh light weight when put into the scale. He searches the heart in every possible way, he puts it into the fire, and then thrusts it into the balances. Oh, might not God say of many of you, "I have searched your heart, and I have found vanity therein? Reprobate silver shall men call you; for God has put you in the furnace and rejected you." And then he might conclude his verdict by saying, "*Mene, mene, tekel*—thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." This, then, is the answer to the question, *How?*

The next question was, *What?* What is it that God sees in man's heart? God sees in man's heart a great deal more than we think of. God sees, and has seen in our hearts, lust, and blasphemy, and murder, and adultery, and malice, and

wrath, and all uncharitableness. The heart never can be painted too black, unless you daub it with something blacker than the devil himself. It is as base as it can be. You have never committed murder, but yet you have had murder in your heart; you may never have stained your hands with lusts and the aspersions of uncleanness, but still it is in the heart Have you never imagined an evil thing? Has your soul never for a moment doted on a pleasure which you were too chaste to indulge in, but which for a moment you surveyed with at least some little complacency and delight? Has not imagination often pictured, even to the solitary monk in his cell, greater vice than men in public life have ever dreamed of? And may not even the divine in his closet be conscious that blasphemies, and murders, and lusts of the vilest class, can find a ready harbor even in the heart which he hopes is dedicated to God? Oh! beloved, it is a sight that no human eye could endure: the sight of a heart really laid bare before one's own inspection would startle us almost into insanity: but God sees the heart in all its bestial sensuousness, in all its wanderings and rebellions, in all its highmindedness and pride; God has searched and knows it altogether.

God sees all the heart's imaginations, and what they are let us not presume to tell. O children of God, these have made you cry and groan full many a time, and though the worldling groans not over them, yet he hath them. Oh, what a filthy stye of Stygian imaginations is the heart; all full of every thing that is hideous, when it once begins to dance and make carnival and revelry concerning sin. But God sees the heart's imaginations.

Again, God sees the heart's devices. You, perhaps, O sinner, have determined to curse God; you have not done so, but you intend to do it. He knows your devices—reads them all. You perhaps will not be permitted to run into the excess of notousness into which you purpose to go; but your very purpose is now undergoing the inspection of the Most High. There is never a design forged in the fires of the heart, before it is beaten on the anvil of resolve, that is not known, and seen, and noted by Jehovah our God.

He knows, next, the resolves of the heart. He knows, O sinner, how many times you have resolved to repent, and have resolved and re-resolved, and then have continued the same. He knows, O thou that hast been sick, how thou didst resolve to seek God, but how thou didst despise thine own resolution, when good health had put thee beyond the temporary danger. Thy resolves have been filed in heaven, and thy broken promises, and thy vows despised, shall be brought out in their order as swift witnesses for thy condemation. All these things are known of God. We have often had very clear proof of God's knowing what is in man's heart, even in the ministry. Some months ago, whilst standing here preaching, I deliberately pointed to a man in the midst of the crowd, and said these words—"There is a man sitting there that is a shoemaker, keeps his shop open on Sunday, had his shop open last Sabbath morning, took ninepence, and there was fourpence profit out of it. His soul is sold to Satan for fourpence." A City Missionary, when going round the West end of the town, met with a poor man, of whom he asked this question: "Do you know Mr. Spurgeon?" He found him reading a sermon. "Yes," he said, "I have every reason to know him; I have been to hear him, and under God's grace I have become a new man. But," said he, "shall I tell you how it was? I went to the Music Hall, and took my seat in the middle of the place, and the man looked at me as if he knew me, and deliberately told the congregation that I was a shoemaker, and that I sold shoes on a Sunday; and I did, sir. But, sir, I should not have minded that; but he said I took ninepence the Sunday before, and that there was fourpence profit; and so I did take ninepence, and fourpence was just the profit, and how he should know that I'm sure I can not tell. It struck me it was God had spoken to my soul through him; and I shut my shop last Sunday, and was afraid to open it and go there, lest he should split about me again." I could tell as many as a dozen authentic stories of cases that have happened in this Hall, where I have deliberately pointed at somebody, without the slightest knowledge of the person, or ever having in the least degree any inkling or idea that what I

said was right, except that I believed I was moved thereto by the Spirit; and so striking has been the description, that the persons have gone away and said, "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did: he was sent of God to my soul, beyond a doubt, or else he could not have painted my case so clearly."

And not only so, but we have known cases in which the thoughts of men have been revealed from the pulpit. I have sometimes seen persons nudge with their elbows, because they have got a smart hit, and I have heard them say, when they went out, "That is just what I said to you when I went in at the door." "Ah!" says the other, "I was thinking of the very thing he said, and he told me of it." Now, if God thus proves his own Omniscience by helping his poor, ignorant servant, to state the very thing, thought and done, when he did not know it, then it must remain decisively proved that God does know everything that is secret, because we see he tells it to men, and enables them to tell it to others. Oh, ye may endeavor as much as ye can to hide your faults from God, but beyond a doubt he shall discover you. He discovers you this day. His Word is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," and "pierces to the dividing asunder of the joints and of the marrow;" and in that last day, when the book shall be opened, and he shall give to every man his sentence, then shall it be seen how exact, how careful, how precious, how personal was God's knowledge of the heart of every man whom he had made.

4. And now the last question: *When?* When does God see us? The answer is, he sees us everywhere and in every place. O foolish man, who thinks to hide himself from the Most High! It is night! no human eye sees thee; the curtain is drawn, and thou art hidden. There are his eyes lowering at thee through the gloom. It is a far-off country; no one knows thee; parents and friends have been left behind, restraints are cast off. There is a Father near thee, who looks upon thee even now. It is a lone spot, and if the deed be done, no tongue shall tell it. There is a tongue in heaven that shall tell it; yea, the beam out of the wall, and the stones in

the field, shall raise up themselves as witnesses against thee. Canst thou hide thyself anywhere where God shall not detect thee? Is not this whole world like a glass hive, wherein we put our bees? and does not God stand and see all our motions when we think we are hidden? Ah, it is but a glass hiding-place. He looketh from heaven, and through stone walls and rocks; yea, to the very centre itself, does his eye pierce, and in the thickest darkness he beholds our deeds.

Come, then, let me make a personal application of the matter, and I have done. If this be true, hypocrite, what a fool thou art! If God can read the heart, O man, what a sorry, sorry thing thy fair pretence must be! Ah! ah! ah! what a change will come over some of you! This world is a masquerade, and ye, many of you, wear the mask of religion. Ye dance your giddy hours, and men think you to be the saints of God. How changed will you be, when, at the door of eternity, you must drop the vizor, and must announce the theatricals in which you live! How you will blush when the paint is washed from off your cheek—when you stand before God naked to your own shame, a hypocrite, unclean, diseased, covered up before with the gew-gaws and the trickery of pretended formality in religion, but now standing there, base, vile, and hideous! There is many a man that bears about him a cancer that would make one sick to see. Oh, how shall hypocrites look when their cancerous hearts are laid bare! Deacon! how you will tremble when your old heart is torn open, and your vile pretences rent away! Minister! how black you will look when your surplice is off, and when your grand pretensions are cast to the dogs! How will you tremble! There will be no sermonizing others then. You yourself will be preached to, and the sermon shall be from that text, "Depart ye cursed." O brethren, above all things shun hypocrisy. If ye mean to be damned, make up your minds to it, and be damned like honest men; but do not, I beseech you, pretend to go to heaven while all the time you are going to hell. If ye mean to mak your abodes in torment forever, then serve the devil, and do not be ashamed of it; stand it right out, and let the world know what you are. But oh! never put on the cloak of relig

ion. I beseech you, do not add to your eternal misery by being a wolf in sheep's clothing. Show the cloven foot; do not hide it. If you mean to go to hell, say so. "If God be God, serve him. If Baal be God, serve him." Do not serve Baal and then pretend to be serving God.

One other practical conclusion. If God sees and knows everything, how this ought to make you tremble—you that have lived in sin for many years! I have known a man who was once stopped from an act of sin by the fact of there being a cat in the room. He could not bear even the eyes of that poor creature to see him. Oh, I would ye could carry about with you the recollection of those eyes that are always on you. Swearer! could you swear if you could see God's eye looking at you? Thief! drunkard! harlot! could ye indulge in your sins, if ye saw his eyes on you? Oh, methinks they would startle you and bid you pause, before ye did in God's own sight rebel against his law. There is a story told of the American War, that one of the prisoners taken by the Americans was subjected to a torture of the most refined character. He says, "I was put into a narrow dungeon; I was comfortably provided for with all I needed; but there was a round slit in the wall, and through that, both night and day, a soldier always looked at me." He says, "I could not rest, I could not eat nor drink, nor do anything in comfort, because there was always that eye—an eye that seemed never to be turned away, and never shut—always following me round that little apartment. Nothing ever hidden from it." Now take home that figure. Recollect that is your position; you are shut in by the narrow walls of time, when ye eat, and when ye drink, when ye rise, and when ye lie upon your beds; when ye walk the streets, or when ye sit at home, that eye is always fixed upon you. Go home now and sin against God, if ye dare; go home now and break his laws to his face, and despise him, and set him at nought! Rush on your own destruction; dash yourselves against the buckler of Jehovah, and destroy yourselves upon his own sword! Nay, rather, "turn ye, turn ye." Turn ye, ye that have followed the ways of sin, turn ye to Christ, and live; and then the same Omniscience which is

now your horror, shall be your pleasure. Sinner! if thou now dost pray, he seeth thee; if thou now dost weep he seeth thee. "When he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him." It shall be even so with thee, if now thou turnest to God and dost believe in his Son Jesus Christ.

# SERMON XI.

## THE IMMUTABILITY OF CHRIST.

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day and for ever."—HEBREWS xiii. 8.

IT is well that there is one person who is the same. It is well that there is one stable rock amidst the changing billows of this sea of life; for how many and how grievous have been the changes of this year? How many of you who commenced in affluence, have by the panic, which has shaken nations, been reduced almost to poverty? How many of you, who in strong health marched into this place on the first Sabbath of last year, have had to come tottering here, feeling that the breath of man is in his nostrils, and wherein is he to be accounted of? Many of you came to this hall with a numerous family, leaning upon the arm of a choice and much-loved friend. Alas! for love, if thou wert all and naught beside, O earth! For ye have buried those ye loved the best. Some of you have come here childless, or widows, or fatherless, still weeping your recent affliction. Changes have taken place in your estate that have made your heart full of misery. Your cups of sweetness have been dashed with draughts of gall; your golden harvests have had tares cast into the midst of them, and you have had to reap the noxious weed along with the precious grain. Your much fine gold has become dim, and your glory has departed; the sweet frames at the commencement of last year became bitter ones at the end. Your raptures and your ecstacies were turned into depression and forebodings. Alas! for our changes, and hallelujah to him that hath no change.

But greater things have changed than we; for kingdoms have trembled in the balances. We have seen a peninsula

deluged with blood, and mutiny raising its bloody war whoop. Nay, the whole world hath changed; earth hath doffed its green, and put on its somber garment of Autumn, and soon expects to wear its ermine robe of snow. All things have changed. We believe that not only in appearance but in reality, the world is growing old. The sun itself must soon grow dim with age; the folding up of the worn-out vesture has commenced; the changing of the heavens and the earth has certainly begun. They shall perish; they all shall wax old as doth a garment; but for ever blessed be him who is the same, and of whose years there is no end. The satisfaction that the mariner feels, when, after having been tossed about for many a day, he puts his foot upon the solid shore, is just the satisfaction of a Christian when, amidst all the changes of this troublous life, he plants the foot of his faith upon such a text as this—"the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." The same stability that the anchor gives the ship, when it hath at last got the grip of some immovable rock, that same stability doth our hope give to our spirits, when, like an anchor, it fixes itself in a truth so glorious as this —"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

I shall first try this morning to open the text by a little *explanation;* then I shall try to *answer a few objections*, which our wicked unbelief will be quite sure to raise against it; and afterward I shall try to *draw a few useful, consoling, and practical lessons* from the great truth of the immutability of Jesus Christ.

I. First, then, we open the text by a little EXPLANATION—"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." He is the same *in his person.* *We* change perpetually; the bloom of youth gives place to the strength of manhood, and the maturity of manhood fades away into the weakness of old age. But "Thou hast the dew of thy youth." Christ Jesus, whom we adore, thou art as young as ever! We came into this world with the ignorance of infancy; we grow up searching, studying, and learning with the diligence of youth; we attain to some little knowledge in our riper years; and then in our old age we totter back to the imbecility of our child-

hood. But O, our Master! thou didst perfectly foreknow all mortal or eternal things from before the foundations of the world, and thou knowest all things now, and for ever thou shalt be the same in thine omniscience. We are one day strong, and the next day weak—one day resolved, and the next day wavering—one hour constant, and the next hour unstable as water. We are one moment holy, kept by the power of God; we are the next moment sinning, led astray by our own lusts; but our Master is for ever the same; pure, and never spotted; firm, and never changing—everlastingly Omnipotent, unchangeably Omniscient. From him no attribute doth pass away; to him no parallax, no tropic, ever comes; without variableness or shadow of a turning, he abideth fast and firm. Did Solomon sing concerning his best beloved, "His head is as the most fine gold: his locks are bushy and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars?" Surely we can even now conclude the description from our own experience of him; and while we endorse every word which went before, we can end the description by saying, "His mouth is most sweet, yea he is altogether lovely. His matchless beauty is unimpaired; he is still 'the chief among ten thousand'—fairest of the sons of men." Did the divine John talk of him when he said—"His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." He is the same; upon his brow there is ne'er a furrow; his locks are gray with reverence, but not with age; his feet stand as firm as when they trod the everlasting mountains in the years

before the world was made—his eyes as piercing as when, for the first time he looked upon a new-born world. Christ's person never changes. Should he come on earth to visit us again, as sure he will, we should find him the same Jesus; as loving, as approachable, as generous, as kind, and though arrayed in nobler garments than he wore when first he visited earth, though no more the Man of Sorrows and grief's acquaintance, yet he would be the same person, unchanged by all his glories, his triumphs, and his joys. We bless Christ that amid his heavenly splendors his person is just the same, and his nature unaffected. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Again: Jesus Christ is the same with regard *to his Father* as ever. He was his Father's well-beloved Son before all worlds; he was his well-beloved in the stream of baptism; he was his well-beloved on the cross; he was his well-beloved when he led captivity captive, and he is not less the object of his Father's infinite affection now than he was then. Yesterday he lay in Jehovah's bosom, God, having all power with his Father—to-day he stands on earth, man, with us, but still the same, for ever—he ascends on high, and still he is his Father's son—still by inheritance, having a more excellent name than angels—still sitting far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named. O Christian, give him thy cause to plead; the Father will answer him as well now as he did aforetime. Doubt not the Father's grace. Go to thine Advocate. He is as near to Jehovah's heart as ever—as prevalent in his intercession. Trust him, then, and in trusting him thou mayest be sure of the Father's loveto thee.

But now there is a yet sweeter thought. Jesus Christ is *the same to his people* as ever. We have delighted, in our happier moments, in days that have rolled away, to think of him that loved us when we had no being; we have often sung with rapture of him that loved us when we loved not him.

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God·
He to save my soul from danger
Interposed his precious blood"

We have looked back, too, upon the years of our troubles and our trials; and we can bear our solemn though humble witness that he has been true to us in all our exigencies, and has never failed us once. Come, then, let us comfort ourselves with this thought—that though to-day he may distress us with a sense of sin, yet his heart is just the same to us as ever. Christ may wear masks that look black to his people, but his face is always the same; Christ may sometimes take a rod in his hand instead of a golden scepter, but the name of his saints is as much engraved upon the hand that grasps the rod as upon the palm that clasps the scepter. And oh, sweet thought that now bursts upon our mind! Beloved, can you conceive how much Christ will love you when you are in heaven? Have you ever tried to fathom that bottomless sea of affection in which you shall swim, when you shall bathe yourself in seas of heavenly rest? Did you ever think of the love which Christ will manifest to you, when he shall present you without spot, or blemish, or any such thing before his Father's throne? Well, pause and remember that he loves you at this hour as much as he will love you then; for he will be the same for ever as he is to-day, and he is the same to-day as he will be for ever. This one thing I know: if Jesus' heart is set on me he will not love me one atom better when this head wears a crown, and when this hand shall, with joyous fingers, touch the strings of golden harps, than he does now, amid all my sin and care and woe. I believe that saying which is written—"As the Father hath loved me, even so have I loved you;" and a higher degree of love we can not imagine. The Father loves his Son infinitely, and even so to day, believer, doth the Son of God love thee. All his heart flows out to thee. All his life is thine; all his person is thine. He can not love thee more; he will not love thee less. The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

But let us here recollect that Jesus Christ is *the same to sinners* to-day as he was yesterday. It is now eight years ago since I first went to Jesus Christ. Come the sixth of this month, I shall then be eight years old in the gospel of the grace of Jesus; a child, a little child therein as yet. I recall that

hour when I heard that exhortation—"Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and beside me there is none else." And I remember, how with much trembling and with a little faith I ventured to approach the Saviour's feet. I thought he would spurn me from him "Sure," said my heart, "if thou shouldst presume to put thy trust in him as thy Saviour, it would be a presumption more damnable than all thy sins put together. Go not to him; he will spurn thee." However, I put the rope about my neck, feeling that if God destroyed me for ever, he would be just. I cast the ashes on my head, and with many a sigh I did confess my sin; and then, when I ventured to draw nigh to him, when I expected that he would frown, he stretched out his hand and said, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." I came like the prodigal, because I was forced to come. I was starved out of that foreign country where, in riotous living I had spent my substance, and I saw my Father's house a great way off; little did I know that my Father's heart was beating high with love to me. O rapturous hour, when Jesus whispered I was his, and when my soul could say, "Jesus Christ is my salvation." And now I would refresh my own memory by reminding myself that what my Master was to me yesterday that he is to-day; and if I know that as a sinner I went to him then and he received me, if I have never so many doubts about my saintship I can not doubt but what I am a sinner; so to thy cross, O Jesus, I go again, and if thou didst receive me then, thou wilt receive me now; and believing that to be true, I turn round to my fellow-immortals, and I say, "He that received me, he that received Manasseh, he that received the thief upon the cross, is the same to-day as he was then. Oh! come and try him! Come and try him! Oh! ye that know your need of him, come ye to him; ye that have sold for nought your heritage above may have it back unbought, the gift of Jesus' love. Ye that are empty, Christ is as full to day as ever. Come! fill yourselves here. Ye that are thirsty, the stream is flowing; ye that are black, the fountain still can purify; ye that are naked, the wardrobe is not empty

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away,
To Christ, and heal your wounds;
Still 'tis the gospel's gracious day,
And now free grace abounds."

I can not pretend to enter into the fullness of my text as I could desire, but one more thought. Jesus Christ is the same to-day as he was yesterday *in the teachings of his Word.* They tell us in these times that the improvements of the age require improvements in theology. Why, I have heard it said that the way Luther preached would not suit this age. We are too polite! The style of preaching, they say, that did in John Bunyan's day, is not the style now. True, they honor these men; they are like the Pharisees; they build the sepulchers of the prophets that their fathers slew, and so they do confess that they are their father's own sons, and like their parents. And men that stand up to preach as those men did, with honest tongues, and know not how to use polished courtly phrases, are as much condemned now as those men were in their time; because, say they, the world is marching on, and the gospel must march on too. No, sirs, the old gospel is the same; not one of her stakes must be removed, not one of her cords must be loosened. "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." Theology hath nothing new in it except that which is false. The preaching of Paul must be the preaching of the minister to-day. There is no advancement here. We may advance in our knowledge of it; but it stands the same, for this good reason, that it is perfect, and perfection can not be any better. The old truth that Calvin preached, that Chrysostom preached, that Paul preached, is the truth that I must preach to-day, or else be a liar to my conscience and my God. I can not shape the truth. I know of no such thing as the paring off the rough edges of a doctrine. John Knox's gospel is my gospel. That which thundered through Scotland must thunder through England again. The great mass of our ministers are sound enough in the faith, but not sound enough in the way they preach it. Election is not mentioned once in the year in many a pulpit; final

perseverance is kept back; the great things of God's law are forgotten, and a kind of mongrel mixture of Arminianism and Calvinism is the delight of the present age. And hence the Lord hath forsaken many of his tabernacles and left the house of his covenant; and he will leave it till again the trumpet gives a certain sound. For wherever there is not the old gospel we shall find "Ichabod" written upon the church walls ere long. The old truth of the Covenanters, the old truth of the Puritans, the old truth of the Apostles, is the only truth that will stand the test of time, and never need to be altered to suit a wicked and ungodly generation. Christ Jesus preaches to-day the same as when he preached upon the mount; he hath not changed his doctrines; men may ridicule and laugh, but still they stand the same—*semper idem* written upon every one of them. They shall not be removed or altered.

Let the Christian remember that this is equally true of the *promises.* Let the sinner remember this is just as true of the *threatenings.* Let us each recollect that not one word can be added to this Sacred Book, nor one letter taken away from it; for as Christ Jesus is yet the same, so is his Gospel, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever.

I have thus briefly opened the text, not in its fullest meanings, but still enough to enable the Christian at his own leisure to see into that depth without a bottom—the immutability of Christ Jesus the Lord.

II. And now comes in one of crooked gait, with hideous aspect—one that hath as many lives as a cat, and that can not be killed any how, though many a great gun hath been shot against him. His name is old Mr. Incredulity—unbelief; and he begins his miserable oration by declaring, "How can that be true? 'Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.' Why, yesterday Christ was all sunshine to me—to-day I am in distress!" Stop, Mr. Unbelief, I beg you to remember that Christ is not changed. You have changed yourself, for you have said in your very accusation that yesterday you rejoiced, but to-day you are in distress. All that may happen, and yet there may be no change in Christ. The

sun may be the same always, though one hour may be cloudy and the next bright with golden light; yet there is no proo that the sun has changed. 'Tis even so with Christ.

"If to-day he deigns to bless us
With a sense of pardoned sin,
He to-morrow may distress us,
Make us feel the plague within.
All to make us,
Sick of self and fond of him."

There is no change in him.

"Immutable his will,
Though dark may be my frame,
His loving heart is still
Unchangeably the same.
My soul through many changes goes,
His love no variation knows."

Your frames are no proof that Christ changes: they are only proof that you change.

But saith old Unbelief again—"Surely God has changed· you look at the old saints of ancient times. What happy men they were! How highly favored of their God! How well God provided for them! But now, sir, when I am hungry, no ravens come and bring me bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening. When I am thirsty, no water leaps out of the rock to supply my thirst. It is said of the children of Israel that their clothes waxed not old; but I have a hole in my coat to-day, and where I shall get another garment I know not. When they marched through the desert he suffered no man to hurt them; but, sir, I am continually beset by enemies. It is true of me as it says in the Scriptures, 'And the Ammonites distressed Israel at the coming in of the year;' for they are distressing me. Why, sir, I see my friends die in clouds; there are no fiery chariots to carry God's Elijahs to heaven now. I lost my son; no prophet lay upon him and gave him life again; no Jesus met me at the city gates, to give me back my son from the gloomy grave. No, sir, these are evil times; the light of Jesus Christ has

become dim; if he walks among the golden candlesticks, yet, still it is not as he used to do. And worse than that, sir, I have heard my father talk of the great men that were in the age gone by: I have heard the names of Romaine, and Toplady, and Scott; I have heard of Whitfields and of Bunyans; and even but a few years ago I heard talk of such men as Joseph Irons—solemn and earnest preachers of a full gospel. But where are those men now? Sir, we have fallen upon an age of drivellings; *men* have died out, and we have only a few dwarfs left us; there are none that walk with the giant tramp and the colossal tread of the mighty fathers, like Owen, and Howe, and Baxter, and Charnock. We are all little men. Jesus Christ is not dealing with us as he did with our fathers. Stop, Unbelief, a minute: let me remind thee that the ancient people of God had their trials too. Know ye not what the apostle Paul says? "For thy sake we are killed all the day long." Now, if there be any change it is a change for the better; for you have not yet "resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

But remember *that* does not affect Christ; for neither nakedness, nor famine, nor sword, has separated us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is true that you have no fiery chariot; but then the angels carry you to Jesus' bosom, and that is as well. It is true no ravens bring you food; it is quite as true you get your food somehow or other. It is quite certain that no rock gushes out with water; but still your water has been sure. It is true your child has not been raised from the dead; but you remember that David had a child that was not raised any more than yours. You have the same consolation that he had: "I shall go to him; he shall not return to me." You say that you have more heart-rendings than the saints had of old. It is your ignorance that makes you say so. Holy men of old said, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me?" Even prophets had to say—"Thou hast made me drunken with wormwood, and broken my teeth with gravel stones." O, you are mistaken: your days are not more full of trouble than the days of Job; you are not more vexed

by the wicked than was Lot of old, you have not more temptations to make you angry than had Moses; and certainly your way is not half so rough as the way of your blessed Lord. The very fact that you have troubles is a proof of his faithfulness; for you have got one half of his legacy, and you will have the other half. You know that Christ's last will and testament has two portions in it. "In the world ye shall have tribulation:" you have got that. The next clause is—"In me ye shall have peace." You have that too. "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." That is yours also.

And then you say that you have fallen upon a bad age with regard to ministers. It may be so; but remember, the promise is true still. "Though I take away from thee bread and water, yet will I never take away thy pastors." You have still such as you have—still some that are faithful to God and to his covenant, and who do not forsake the truth, and though the day may be dark, yet it is not so dark as days have been; and besides remember, what you say to-day is just what your forefathers said. Men in the days of Toplady looked back to the days of Whitfield; men in the days of Whitfield looked back to the days of Bunyan; men in the days of Bunyan wept because of the days of Wycliffe, and Calvin, and Luther; and men then wept for the days of Augustine and Chrysostom. Men in those days wept for the days of the Apostles; and doubtless men in the days of the Apostles wept for the days of Jesus Christ; and no doubt some in the days of Jesus Christ were so blind as to wish to return to the days of prophesy, and thought more of the days of Elijah than they did of the most glorious day of Christ. Some men look more to the past than the present. Rest assured, that Jesus Christ is the same to-day as he was yesterday, and he will be the same for ever.

Mourner, be glad! I have heard of a little girl who, when her father died, saw her mother weeping immoderately. Day after day, and week after week, her mother refused to be comforted; and the little girl stepped up to her mother, and putting her little hand inside her mother's hand, looked up in her face, and said, "Mamma, is God dead? Is God dead, mam-

ma?" And her mother thought, "Surely, no." The child seemed to say, "Thy maker is thy husband; the Lord of hosts is his name. So you may dry your tears, I have a father in heaven, and you have a husband still." O! ye saints that have lost your gold and your silver; ye have got treasure in heaven, where no moth nor rust doth corrupt, where no thieves break through and steal! Ye that are sick to-day, ye that have lost health, remember the day is coming when all that shall be made up to you, and when ye shall find that the flame has not hurt you, it has but consumed your dross and refined your gold. Remember, Jesus Christ is "the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever."

III. And now I must be brief in drawing one or two sweet conclusions from that part of the text.

First, then, if he be the same to-day as yesterday, my soul, set not thine affections upon these changing things, but set thine heart upon him. O my heart, build not thine house upon the sandy pillars of a world that soon must pass away, but build thy hopes upon this rock, which, when the rain descends, and floods shall come, shall stand immovably secure. O my soul, I charge thee, lay up thy treasure in this secure granary. O my heart, I bid thee now put thy treasure where thou canst never lose it. Put it in Christ; put all thine affections in his person, all thy hope in his glory, all thy trust in his efficacious blood, all thy joy in his presence, and then thou wilt have put thyself and put thine all where thou canst never lose anything, because it is secure. Remember, O my heart, that the time is coming when all things must fade, and when thou must part with all. Death's gloomy night must soon put out thy sunshine; the dark flood must soon roll between thee and all thou hast. Then put thine heart with him who will never leave thee; trust thyself with him who will go with thee through the black and surging current of death's stream, and who will walk with thee up the steep hills of heaven and make thee sit together with him in heavenly places for ever. Go, tell thy secrets to that friend that sticketh closer than a brother. My heart, I charge thee, trust all thy concerns with him who never can be taken from thee, who will never leave

thee, and who will never let thee leave him, even "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." That is one lesson.

Well, then, the next. If Jesus Christ be always the same, then, my soul, endeavor to imitate him. Be thou the same, too. Remember that if thou hadst more faith, thou wouldst be as happy in the furnace, as on the mountain of enjoyment. Thou wouldst be as glad in famine, as in plenty; thou wouldst rejoice in the Lord when the olive yielded no oil, as well as when the vat was bursting and overflowing its brim. If thou hadst more confidence in thy God, thou wouldst have far less of tossings up and down; and if thou hadst greater nearness to Christ thou wouldst have less vacillation. Yesterday thou couldst pray with all the power of prayer; perhaps if thou didst always live near thy Master, thou mightest always have the same power on thy knees. One time thou canst bid defiance to the rage of Satan, and thou canst face a frowning world; to-morrow thou wilt run away like a craven. But if thou didst always remember him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, thou mightest always be firm and stedfast in thy mind. Beware of being like a weathercock. Seek of God, that his law may be written on your hearts as if it were written on stone, and not as if it were written in sand. Seek, that his grace may come to you like a river, and not like a brook that fails. Seek, that you may keep your conversation always holy; that your course may be like the shining light that tarries not, but that burneth brighter and brighter, until the fullness of the day. Be ye like Christ—ever the same.

Again: if Christ be always the same, Christian, rejoice! Come what may, thou art secure.

> "Let mountains from their seats be hurled
> Down to the deeps, and buried there;
> Convulsions shake the solid world;
> Our faith shall never need to fear."

If kingdoms should go to rack, the Christian need not tremble! Just, for a minute, imagine a scene like this. Suppose

for the next three days the sun should not rise; suppose the moon should be turned into a clot of blood, and shine no more upon the world; imagine that a darkness that might be felt, brooded over all men; imagine, next, that all the world did tremble in an earthquake, till every tower, and house, and hut fell down: imagine, next, that the sea forgot its place, and leaped upon the earth; and that the mountains ceased to stand, and began to tremble from their pedestals; conceive after that, that a blazing comet streamed across the sky—that the thunder bellowed incessantly—that the lightnings, without a moment's pause, followed one the other; conceive, then, that thou didst behold divers terrible sights, fiendish ghosts, and grim spirits; imagine, next, that a trumpet, waxing exceeding loud, did blow; that there were heard the shrieks of men dying and perishing; imagine, that in the midst of all this confusion, there was to be a found a saint. My friend, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," would keep him as secure amidst all these horrors, as we are to-day. Oh! rejoice! I have pictured the worst that can come. *Then* you would be secure. Come what may then, you are safe, while Jesus Christ is the same.

And now, last of all, if Jesus Christ be "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," what sad work this is for the ungodly! Ah! sinner, when he was on earth, he said, "Their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." When he stood upon the mount, he said, "It were better to enter life halt or maimed, than having two hands, and two eyes to be cast into hell-fire." As a man on earth, he said that the goats should be on the left, and that he would say to them, "Depart, ye cursed." Sinner, he will be as good as his word. He has said, "He that believeth not shall be damned." He will damn you if you believe not, depend upon it. He has never broken a promise yet; he will never break a threatening. That same truth which makes us confident to-day that the righteous shall go away into everlasting life, should make you quite as confident that unbelievers shall go into eternal misery. If he had broken his promise, he might break his threatening; but as he has kept one, he will keep the other.

Do not hope that he will change, for change he will not. Think not that the fire which he said was unquenchable, will, after all, be extinguished. No, within a few more years, my hearer, if thou dost not repent, thou wilt find that every jot and every letter of the threatenings of Jesus will be fulfilled; and, mark thee, fulfilled in *thee*. Liar, he said, "All liars shall have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone." He will not deceive you. Drunkard, he has said, "Ye know that no drunkard hath eternal life." He will not belie his word. You shall not have eternal life. He has said, "The nations that forget God shall be cast into hell." All ye that forget religion, moral people you may be, he will keep his word to you; he will cast you into hell. O "kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little; blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Come, sinner, bow thy knee; confess thy sin and leave it; and then come to him; ask him to have mercy upon thee. He will not forget his promise—"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Come and try him. With all your sins about you, come to him *now*. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved;" for this is my Master's gospel, and I now declare it—"He that believeth and is immersed shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." God grant you grace to believe, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

# SERMON XII.

## PAUL'S SERMON BEFORE FELIX.

"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."—Acts, xxiv. 25.

The power of the gospel appears in marvelous grandeur when we see its hold upon hearts devoted to it, when subjected to trouble, persecution, and sorrow. How mighty must that gospel be, which, when it gained an entrance into the heart of Paul, could never be driven out of it! For it he suffered the loss of all things, and as for them, he counted them but dung, that he might win Christ. To spread the truth, he encountered hardships, shipwrecks, perils on the land, and perils by sea; but none of these things moved him, neither did he count his life dear unto him, that he might win Christ and be found in him. Persecution followed persecution; of the Jews was he beaten with rods; he was dragged from one tribunal to another; scarce in any city did he find anything but bonds and imprisonment awaiting him. Attacked in his own country—he is accused at Jerusalem, and arraigned at Cesarea; he is taken from one tribunal to another to be tried for his life. But mark how he always maintains the prominent passion of his soul. Put him where you may, he seems to be like John Bunyan, who says, "If you let me out of prison to-day, I will preach the gospel again to-morrow, by the grace of God." Nay, more than that, he preached it in prison, before his judges he proclaimed it. Standing up before the Sanhedrim, he cries, "As touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question." When brought to stand before Agrippa, he tells out his conversion, and so sweetly speaks of the grace of God, that the king himself cries, "Almost

thou persuadest me to be a Christian;" and here in our text when he stands before the Roman Procurator, to be tried for life or death, instead of entering into a defence of himself, he reasons "of righteousness, continence, and judgment to come," until his judge trembles, and he that sits upon the throne takes the prisoner's place, while the prisoner judges him, in anticipation of that time when the saints shall judge the angels, as assessors with Christ Jesus. Why, once let a man believe the gospel, and determine to spread it, and it makes him a grand man. If he be a man destitute of power, intellect, and talent, it makes him grandly earnest in his arduous desire to serve Christ, in the little measure in which he can do it; but if he be a gifted man, it sets his whole soul on fire, brings out all his powers, develops everything that lies hidden, digs up every talent that had been buried in its napkin, and spreads out all the gold and silver of man's intellectual wealth, displaying it all to the honor of that Christ who has bought it all with his blood.

We might stay a little while and dilate on this thought, and show you how, in all ages, this has been the truth, that the power of the gospel has been eminently proved in its influence over men's hearts, proving the truth of that utterance of Paul, when he said, that neither tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, shall separate them from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ their Lord. But instead of so doing, I invite you to contemplate the text more closely. We have before us a picture containing three characters: Felix and Drusilla, sitting side by side upon the judgment-seat; Paul, the prisoner, brought in bound in chains, to explain to Drusilla and Felix the doctrines of the Christian religion, in order that he might either be acquitted or condemned to die. You have a judge extremely willing to put the prisoner to death, because he desired to please the Jews; you have, on the other hand, a prisoner, unabashed, who comes before the judge, and without any debate, begins to unfold the gospel, selecting a certain part of it, described in our text as reasoning concerning "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." The judge trembles, dismisses the prisoner in haste, and promises to attend to him at a convenient season

Note, first then, *the appropriate sermon;* note, secondly, *the affected audience*—for the audience was certainly moved—"Felix trembled!" Note, then, thirdly, the *lamentable disappointment.* Instead of attending to the message, "Go thy way" was all that Paul had.

I. First, then, we have an APPROPRIATE SERMON. Just hear for a moment or two the history of Felix. Felix was orig inally a slave; he was freed by Claudius, and became one of the infamous favorites of the emperor. Of course in that capacity he pandered to his master's vices, and was at all times prepared to indulge the Emperor in every lustful wish of his abominable heart. Through this he became promoted, and ran through the stages of Roman preferment, until he obtained the Governorship of Judea. Whilst he was Governor there, he committed every act of extortion which it was possible for him to commit, and went so far at last, that the Emperor Nero was obliged to recall him, and he would have been severely punished for his crimes, had it not been for the influence of his brother Pallas, another freedman, with the Emperor, through whom he obtained a release, after a sharp rebuke. The Roman historian, Tacitus, says, "He exercised, in Judea, the imperial functions with a mercenary soul." You may easily see, then, how appropriate was the discourse, when the apostle Paul reasoned concerning righteousness. Felix had been an unjust extortioner, and the apostle purposely selected righteousness to be a topic of his discourse. By the side of Felix sat Drusilla; in the verse preceding our text she is called his wife. It is said she was a Jewess. This Drusilla was a daughter of Herod Agrippa, the great—a woman noted in that age for her superlative charms, and for her unbridled voluptuousness. She had been once affianced to Antiochus, who, upon the death of Herod, refused to marry her. She was afterward married to Azizus, the king of the Amesenes, who, although a heathen, was so fond of her, that he submitted to the most rigorous rites of the Jewish religion in order to obtain her in marriage. His love was but ill-requited, for in a little time she deserted him at the instigation of Felix, and was, at the time of Paul's address, living as the wife of the

lascivious Felix. We may easily understand then, why the apostle Paul, fixing his stern eye on Drusilla, reasoned concerning continence, and publicly rebuked both Felix and Drusilla for the shameless lust in which they were publicly living. And then you may imagine since there was now a court sitting, and Felix himself was the judge, and Paul the prisoner, how strikingly appropriate was the last theme—"judgment to come."

I think, my brethren, it would not be very hard for us to imagine how well the apostle handled this subject. I can conceive that Felix expected to have a grand disquisition upon some recondite themes of the gospel. Possibly he expected that the apostle Paul would reason concerning the resurrection of the dead. He thought perhaps that predestination, election, and free will would be the topics of the apostle's discourse. "Surely," thought he, "he will tell me those deep and hidden matters in which the gospel of Jesus differs from Judaism." Not so. In another place, on Mar's Hill, the apostle would speak of resurrection; in another place he could speak of election, and declare that God was the potter, and man was but the clay. This was not the place for that; and this was not the time for such subjects; this was the time for preaching the plain precepts of the gospel, and for dealing sternly with a wicked man who sat in eminent power. Conceive then, the pointed manner of his opening discourse—How he would address Felix concerning righteousness. I can imagine how he would bring before the mind of Felix, the widow who had been defrauded of inheritance, the fatherless children, who, cast from affluence, were led to beg their bread. I can suppose how he brought before the mind of that base man the many bribes that he had taken, when he sat upon his judgment-seat. He would recall to him the false decisions that he had given; he would remind him how the Jews, as a nation, had been oppressed—how, by taxation, they had been ground to the earth; he would bring before him one scene after another, where avarice had overridden equity, boldly and sternly depicting the exact character of the man; and then, at the end, declaring that such men could have no in

heritance in the kingdom of God—bidding him repent of this his wickedness, that his sins might be forgiven him. Then gently and delicately turning to the other subject, I can imagine how he would fix his eyes upon Drusilla, and remind her that she had lost everything for which a woman ought to live, and solemnly bring the most powerful motives to bear upon her lascivious heart; and then turning to Felix, would remind him that adulterers, fornicators, and unclean persons, have no inheritance in the kingdom of God—reminding him how the vices of a ruler would tend to pollute a nation, and how the iniquities of the nation of the Jews must, in a great measure, be laid to his charge. I can conceive how, for a moment, Felix would bite his lips. Paul gave him no time for anger and passion; for in a moment, in a fury of impassioned eloquence, he introduced the "judgment to come." He made Felix think he saw the great white throne, the books opened, and himself arraigned before his judge: he made him hear the voices of the trumpet—the "Come ye blessed"—the "Depart ye cursed." He petrified him, nailed him to his seat, opened his ears, and made them listen, while with stern and impassioned earnestness, though his hands were bound with chains, he used the liberty of the gospel in upbraiding him. Well do I conceive that then Felix began to tremble. He that had been base, and mean, and perfidious, trembled like a coward slave, as he really was; and though sitting on throne, he pictured himself already damned. What he next would have done we can not tell, if the devil had not then suggested to him that it was time to rise; for in hot haste he and Drusilla left the throne. "Go thy way for this time; when I have convenient season, I will call for thee."

Hear me, then, brethren! What the apostle Paul did, every minister ought to do. He selected a topic appropriate to his audience. It is ours ever to do the same. But are there not to be found many ministers who, if they addressed kings and princes, would pour out before them the vilest adulation and flattery that ever came from mortal lips? Are there not many who, when they are aware the great and mighty ones are listening to them, trim their doctrine, cut the

edges of their speech, and endeavor in some way or other to make themselves pleasing to their audience? Can there not be found many ministers who, if addressing an Antinomian audience, would confine themselves strictly to predestination and reprobation? and ministers who, if they addressed an audience of philosophers, would just talk about morality but never mention such words as the covenant of grace and salvation by blood? Are there not some to be found, who think the highest object of the minister is to attract the multitude and then to please them? O my God! how solemnly ought each of us to bewail our sin, if we feel that we have been guilty in this matter. What is it to have pleased men? Is there aught in it that can make our head lie easy on the pillow of our death? Is there aught in it that can give us boldness in the day of judgment, or cause us happiness when we face thy tribunal, O Judge of quick and dead? No, my brethren, we must always take our texts so that we may bear upon our hearers with all our might. I hope I may never preach *before* a congregation—I desire always to preach *to* you; nor do I wish to exhibit powers of eloquence, nor would I even pretend to exhibit any depth of learning. I would simply say, "Hear me, my fellow men, for God doth send me unto you. There are some things that concern you; I will tell you of them. You are dying; many of you when you die must perish for ever; it is not for me to be amusing you with some deep things that may instruct your intellect but do not enter your hearts; it is for me to fit the arrow to the string and send it home—to unsheathe the sword—be the scabbard never so glittering, to cast it aside, and let the majesty of naked truth smite at your hearts; for in the day of judgment aught beside personal home-speaking will be consumed as wood, and hay, and stubble; but these shall abide, like the gold and silver and precious stones that can not be consumed.

But some men will say, "Sir, ministers ought not to be personal." Ministers ought to be personal, and they will never be true to their Master till they are. I admire John Knox for going, Bible in hand, to Queen Mary, and sternly upbraid-

ing her. I admit I do not exactly love the way in which he did it; but the thing itself I love. The woman had been a sinner, and he told her so flat to her face But now we poor craven sons of nobodies have to stand and talk about generalities; we are afraid to point you out and tell you of your sins personally. But, blessed be God, from that fear I have been delivered long ago. There walketh not a man on the surface of this earth whom I dare not reprove. There are none of you, however connected with me by ties of profession or in any other respect, that I would blush to speak personally to, as to the things of the kingdom of God; and it is only by being bold, courageous, and sending home the truth, that we shall at last be free from the blood of our hearers. May God grant us the power of Paul, that we may reason on appropriate subjects, and not select generalities, when we ought to be pushing home truths to the consciences of our hearers. After all, the apostle Paul needs no eulogy. The best eulogy that could be passed on the apostle was the fact that "Felix trembled." And that brings us to the second part of our discourse."

II. "FELIX TREMBLED." Yes, the poor prisoner, having nought wherewith to assist him in the delivery of the truth but having everything to his disadvantage—the chain, the prison dress, the character of one that had stirred up sedition in a nation—this poor prisoner, with believing hand, laid hold on the sword of truth, and with this he did divide in sunder the joints and marrow. He did beard the lion in his den. Even now I see him look the governor sternly in the face, attack him in his heart, drive him from his excuses, push the word home at the point of the bayonet of truth, drive him from every refuge of lies, and make him tremble! O marvellous power of a preached gospel! O mighty truth that God is with the ministry, when the kings of the earth that take counsel together are yet dismayed by it. Who is he that dotl not see here something more than human eloquence, when prisoner becomes the judge and the prince upon the throne becomes the criminal? "Felix trembled." Have I not some here who have experienced the same feelings as Felix? Some

plain-spoken minister has told you something that was rather too plain for you. At first you were angry; on second thoughts, and as the man moved on in his discourse, you became chagrined that you gave him the opportunity of thus exposing you, as you imagined. A better thought struck you, and you saw at once that the man could have no intention personally to insult you; and then your feelings changed. Thunderbolt after thunderbolt fell from his lips; he seemed a very Jupiter Tonans sitting upon his throne, casting lightnings from his lips. Ye began to tremble. "Verily here is a man that has told me all things that ever I did; is not this man sent from Christ?" Ah! and thus you have borne your witness to the truth of the gospel. Though you have not felt its power to your salvation, yet you have been an unwilling witness that the gospel has been true; for you have felt its power when it made your knees knock together, and your eyes run down with tears.

But what is it that makes men tremble under the sound of the Gospel? Some say it is their conscience. Yes, and doubtless it is in some sense. The poet said, "Conscience makes cowards of us all;" and certainly, when the minister's exposition is faithful and pertinent to our own case, conscience, if it be not thoroughly seared and dead, will make the blush mantle on our cheeks. But I take it that conscience of itself is so thoroughly corrupt, together with all the other powers of manhood, that it would never even make a man go so far as trembling, if there were not something at work upon the conscience, besides being left to its own natural force. My brethren, I believe that what some people call natural conviction is, after all, the work of the Spirit. Some very profound divines are so fond of the doctrine that the Holy Spirit always works efficaciously, that they think that the Spirit never can work a transitory emotion in a man's soul; they impute such things to conscience. And if they see a man like Felix trembling, they say 'tis all natural conscience! Now, do they not see that they are in this touching on another doctrine equally dear to them—the doctrine of total depravity?—for if men be totally depraved by nature, then,

as trembling is a good thing, they are not capable even of that without some influence of the Holy Spirit. The fact is, my hearers, the Holy Spirit works in two ways. In some men's hearts he works with restraining Grace only, and the restraining Grace, though it will not save them, is enough to keep them from breaking out into the open and corrupt vices in which some men indulge who are totally left by the restraints of the Spirit. Now, there was in Felix some little portion of this restraining Grace; and when the Apostle laid the Gospel open to him, this restraining Grace quickened the conscience, and compelled Felix to tremble. Mark you, this Grace man may resist and does resist; for albeit that the Holy Spirit is Omnipotent and never can be resisted when he works Omnipotently, yet as a strong man may sometimes not put out all his strength, but work with his finger, for instance, so that he may permit even a gnat or an ant to overcome him, even so the Holy Spirit sometimes works but temporarily and but for good and excellent purposes, which he always accomplishes; but he allows men to quench and resist his influences, so that salvation is not so much as approached thereby. God the Holy Spirit may work in men some good desires and feelings, and yet have no design of saving them. But mark, none of these feelings are things that accompany sure salvation, for if so, they would be continued. But he does not work Omnipotently to save, except in the persons of his own elect, whom he assuredly bringeth to himself. I believe, then, that the trembling of Felix is to be accounted for by the restraining grace of the Spirit quickening his conscience and making him tremble.

But what shall be said of some of you who never tremble? Thou hast come hither this morning with thy brazen face, and with thine impudent and arrogant heart. Thou hast been mouthing high heaven with thy blasphemies; and now thou standest all unmoved and unabashed in the house of God. Though a Baxter should rise from the dead, and with moving sighs and tears should preach the Gospel, you would laugh and scoff; though Boanerges with a tongue of thunder should come and preach to you, you would turn up your lip and find

some fault with his oratory, and his words would never reach your heart. O ungodly generation! how hath God given you up, and how hath hell bewitched you? O race of evil doers! children that are corrupters! how are ye seared. My soul reads with prophetic glance the handwriting on the wall! You are condemned already; you are past hope, "trees plucked up by the roots, twice dead." For in the fact that ye tremble not, there is proof not only of your death but of your positive corruption. Ye shall die as ye are, without hope, without trust or refuge; for he that hath lost feeling hath lost hope; he that is past conscience God the Holy Spirit hath given up, and he will no more strive with him for ever.

III. And now, passing rapidly over this point of the trembling audience, we come in the next place to the LAMENTABLE DISAPPOINTMENT which Paul experienced, when he saw Felix rise in haste, and dismiss him from his presence. "It is wonderful," said a good man once to a minister, "it is wonderful to see a whole congregation moved to tears by the preaching of the Word." "Yes," said that minister, "it is wonderful; but I know a wonder ten times greater than that: the wonder is, that those people should so soon wipe away their tears and forget what they have heard." 'Tis wonderful that Felix trembled before Paul; 'tis more wonderful that Felix should say, "Go thy way." "'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange," that when the word touches the conscience, even then sin hath such power over men, that the truth can be repulsed and driven out of the heart. Felix, unhappy Felix! why is it that thou dost rise from thy judgment-seat? Is it that thou hast much business to do? Stop, Felix; let Paul speak to thee a minute longer. Thou hast business: but hast thou no business for thy soul? Stop, unhappy man! Art thou about again to be extortionate, again to make thy personal riches greater! Oh! stop: canst thou not spare another minute for thy poor soul? It is to live for ever: hast thou naught laid up for it—no hope in heaven, no blood of Christ, no pardon of sin, no sanctifying Spirit, no imputed righteousness? Ah! man there will be a time when the business that seems

so important to thee will prove to have been but a day-dream, a poor substitute for the solid realities thou hast forgotten. Dost thou reply, "Nay, the king has sent me an urgent commission; I must attend to Cæsar." Ah! Felix, but thou hast a greater monarch than Cæsar: there is one who is Emperor of heaven and Lord of earth; canst thou spare no time to attend to his commands? Before his presence Cæsar is but a worm. Man! wilt thou obey the one, and wilt thou despise the other? Ah! no; I know what thou durst not say. Felix, thou art turning aside again to indulge in thy lascivious pleasures. Go, and Drusilla with thee! But stop! Darest thou do that, with that last word ringing in thy ears, "Judgment to come." What! wilt thou repeat that wanton dalliance that hath damned thee already, and wilt thou go again to imbrue thy hands in lust, and doubly damn thy spirit, after warnings heard and felt? O man! I could weep o'er thee, to think that as the bullock goeth to the slaughter, and as the lamb licks the knife, so dost thou go back to the sin that destroys thee, and to the lust that ruins thee. You, too, many of you, have often been impressed under the ministry. I know what you have said on the Monday morning, after deep searchings of heart on the Sabbath: you have said, "I must attend to business, I must see after the things of this world." Ah! you will say that one day, when hell shall laugh you in the face for your folly. Think of men that are dying every day saying, "We must live," and forgetting that they must die. O poor soul! to be caring about that house, thy body, and neglecting the tenant within! Another replies, "I must have a little more pleasure." Pleasure dost thou call it? What! can there be pleasure in turning suicide to thine own soul—pleasure in defying thy Maker, trampling on his laws, despising his grace? If this be pleasure, 'tis a pleasure over which angels might weep. What, man, wilt thou count this pleasure when thou comest to die? Above all, wilt thou count this pleasure when thou dost stand before thy Maker's bar at last? It is a strange delusion that causes thee to believe a lie. There is no pleasure in that which brings wrath upon thy soul, even to the uttermost.

But the usual reply is, "There is time enough yet." The young man says, "Let me alone till I grow old." And you old men, what do you say? I can suppose that the youth looks forward to life, and expects to find a future time more convenient. But there are some of you o'er whose heads seventy winters have blown. When do you hope to find a convenient season? You are within a few days' march of the tomb: if you do but open your poor dull eyes, you may see death but a slight distance in advance. The young *may* die; the old *must!* To sleep in youth is to sleep in a siege; to sleep in old age is to slumber during the attack. What! man, wilt thou that art so near thy Maker's bar still put him off with a "Go thy way?" What! procrastinate now, when the knife is at thy throat—when the worm is at the heart of the tree, and the branches have begun to wither—when the grinders fail even now, because they are few, and they that look out of the windows are darkened? The sere and yellow leaf has come upon thee, and thou art still unready for thy doom! O man! of all fools, a fool with a gray head is the worst fool anywhere. With one foot in the grave, and another foot on a sandy foundation, how shall I depict you, but by saying to you, as God said to the rich man, "Thou fool! a few more nights and thy soul shall be required of thee;" and then where art thou?

But still the common cry is, "There is time enough." Even the worldly moralist said, "Time enough is always little enough." Time enough, man! What for? Surely you have spent time enough in sin: the time past may "suffice you to have wrought the will of the Gentiles." What! time enough to serve a God that laid down his life for you? No! eternity will not be too long to utter his praise, and therefore it can not be too long to love him here, and serve him the few remaining days that you are to live on earth.

But stop! I will reason with you. Come, Felix! thou shalt not go away this morning till my whole soul hath poured itself out over thee, not until I have cast mine arms round thee, and tried to stop thee this time from turning from the face of him that bids thee live. Thou sayest, "Another time"

How knowest thou that thou wilt ever feel again as thou feelest now? This morning, perhaps, a voice is saying in thine heart, "Prepare to meet thy God." To-morrow that voice will be hushed. The gayeties of the ball-room and the theater will put out that voice that warns thee now, and perhaps thou wilt never hear it again. Men all have their warnings, and all men who perish have had a *last warning*. Perhaps this is your last warning. You are told to-day, that except ye repent, ye must perish, except ye put your trust in Christ, ye must be cast away forever. Perhaps no honest lip will again warn you; perhaps no tearful eye will ever look on you affectionately again; God to-day is pulling the reins tight to check you from your lust; perhaps, if to day you spurn the bit, and rush madly on, he will throw the reins upon your back, saying, "Let him alone;" and then it is a dark steeplechase between earth and hell, and you will run it in mad confusion, never thinking of a hell till you find yourself past warning, past repentance, past faith, past hope.

But again: how knowest thou, if thou shouldst ever have these feelings again, God will accept thee then? "To-day," he says, "to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." This hour his love weepeth over you, and his bowels yearn for you. To-day he says, "Come, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; and though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow." Do you to-day turn a deaf ear to him? Do you to-day forego his invitation and despise his warning? Take heed! You may one day need what now you despise, and you may then cry to him, but he will not hear you; you may then pray to him, but he will shut out your prayer, and his only answer will be, "*I called!*" "*I called, and you refused.* You stood against that pillar under the gallery; *I called and you refused! I stretched out my hands*, as if I would bring you to my bosom, *and no man regarded* me You were there in the gallery; you listened, but it was as though you heard not; therefore"—and oh! the dreadful conclusion!—"*I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh.*" Stay! those are not my words;

they are God's words. Turn ye to the book of Proverbs, and find them there. It were a harsh thing for me to say of God; but God says it of himself, and God is true, though every man be a liar; and if he be true, how know ye that he may not despise your prayer one day, shut out your cry, and banish you forever?

But again, how do you know that you shall live to be warned again? Said a minister once, when I gently hinted to him that he had not preached the gospel that morning, "No, I did not mean to preach to sinners in the morning; but I will preach to them in the evening." "Ah!" said I, "but what if some of your congregation of the morning should be in hell before the evening." So may I say to you. You have promised to go to a friend's house to-day, you think you can not break that promise; you wish you could. You wish you could go home and fall on your knees and pray; but no, you can not, because your promise binds you. You will have a convenient season one of these days! And so God Almighty is to wait man's convenience! How do you know you will live till that convenience comes? A little too much heat or too much cold within the brain—a little too fast flowing of the blood, or a little too slow circulation thereof—some little turning of the fluids of the body in a wrong direction, and you are dead!

"Dangers stand thick through all the ground,
To bear you to the tomb,
And fierce diseases wait around,
To hurry mortals home."

Oh! why will you then dare to procrastinate, and say, "Time enough yet?" Will your soul ever be saved by your saying "Time enough yet?" Archbishop Tillotson well says, "A man might say I resolve to eat, but the resolve to eat would never feed his body. A man might say, I am resolved to drink, but the resolve to drink would never slake his thirst." And you may say, "I am resolved by-and-by to seek God;" but your resolve will not save you. It is not the forgetful hearer, but the doer of the word that shall be blessed therein.

Oh that ye might now say—To-day, my God, to-day I confess my sin; to-day I ask thee to manifest thy grace; to-day receive my guilty soul, and show me a Saviour's blood; to-day I renounce my follies, my vices, and my sins, constrained by Sovereign Grace; to-day I cast away my good works as my ground of trust; to-day I cry,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling!"

Oh! happy minister who shall have such an audience!—happier than Paul, if he should know that his congregation had said this! Come, O Holy Spirit, and draw unwilling hearts, and make them bow before the scepter of sovereign grace.

Preaching, you see, takes away my voice. Ah! it is not that. It is not the preaching, but the sighing over your souls that is the hard work. I could preach forever: I could stand here day and night to tell my Master's love, and warn poor souls; but 'tis the after-thought that will follow me when I descend these pulpit steps, that many of you, my hearers, will neglect this warning. You will go; you will walk into the street; you will joke; you will laugh. My Master says, "Son of man, hast thou heard what the children of Israel say concerning thee? Behold, thou art as one that playeth a tune upon an instrument; they make merry with thee, and they go their ways." Yes, but that were little. To be laughed at is no great hardship to me. I can delight in scoffs and jeers; caricatures, lampoons, and slanders, are my glory; of these things I boast, yea, in these I will rejoice. But that you should turn from your own mercy, this is my sorrow. Spit on me, but oh! repent! Laugh at me: but oh! believe in my Master! Make my body as the dirt of the streets, if you will: but damn not your own souls! Oh! do not despise your own mercies. Put not away from you the gospel of Christ. There are many other ways of playing fool beside that. Carry coals in your bosom: knock your head against a wall: but do not damn your souls for the mere sake of

being a fool, for fools to laugh at. Oh! be in earnest upon an earnest subject. If there be no hereafter, live as you like; if there be no heaven, if there be no hell, laugh at me! But if these things be true, and you believe them, I charge you, as I shall face you at the judgment bar of the Lord Jesus in the day of judgment—I charge you, by your own immortal welfare, lay these things to heart. Prepare to meet your God, O sons of Israel! And the Lord help you in this thing; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

# SERMON XIII.

## THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

Mch. 1901

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.—ISAIAH, liii. 10.

WHAT myriads of eyes are casting their glances at the sun! What multitudes of men lift up their eyes, and behold the starry orbs of heaven! They are continually watched by thousands—but there is one great transaction in the world's history, which every day commands far more spectators than that sun which goeth forth like a bridegroom, strong to run his race. There is one great event, which every day attracts more admiration than do the sun, and moon, and stars, when they march in their courses. That event is, the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. To it, the eyes of all the saints who lived before the Christian era were always directed; and backwards, through the thousand years of history, the eyes of all modern saints are looking. Upon Christ, the angels in heaven perpetually gaze. "Which things the angels desire to look into," said the apostle. Upon Christ, the myriad eyes of the redeemed are perpetually fixed; and thousands of pilgrims, through this world of tears, have no higher object for their faith, and no better desire for their vision, than to see Christ as he is in heaven, and in communion to behold his person. Beloved, we shall have many with us, whilst this morning we turn our face to the Mount of Calvary. We shall not be solitary spectators of the fearful tragedy of our Saviour's death: we shall but dart our eyes to that place which is the focus of heaven's joy and delight, the cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Taking our text, then, as a guide, we propose to visit Cal

vary, hoping to have the help of the Holy Spirit whilst we look upon him who died upon the cross. I would have you notice this morning, first of all, *the cause of Christ's death*—"It pleased the Lord to bruise him." "It pleased *Jehovah* to bruise him," saith the original; "*he* hath put him to grief." Secondly, *the reason of Christ's death*—"When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." Christ died because he was an offering for sin. And then, thirdly, *the effects and consequences of Christ's death.* "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." Come, Sacred Spirit, now, whilst we attempt to speak on these matchless themes.

I. First, we have here THE ORIGIN OF CHRIST'S DEATH. "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." He who reads Christ's life, as a mere history, traces the death of Christ to the enmity of the Jews, and to the fickle character of the Roman governor. In this he acteth justly, for the crime and sin of the Saviour's death must lay at the door of manhood. This race of ours became a deicide and slew the Lord, and nailed its Saviour to a tree. But he who reads the Bible with the eye of faith, desiring to discover its hidden secrets, sees something more in the Saviour's death than Roman cruelty, or Jewish malice: he sees the solemn decree of God fulfilled by men, who were the ignorant, but guilty instruments of its accomplishment. He looks beyond the Roman spear and nail, beyond the Jewish taunt and jeer, up to the Sacred Fount, whence all things flow, and traces the crucifixion of Christ to the breast of Deity. He believes with Peter—"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." We dare not impute to God the sin, but at the same time the fact, with all its marvelous effects in the world's redemption, we must ever trace to the Sacred Fountain of divine love. So doth our prophet. He says, "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him." He overlooks both Pilate and Herod, and traces it to the heavenly Father, the first Person in the Divine Trinity. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, *he* hath put him to grief."

Now, beloved, there be many who think that God the Father is at best but an indifferent spectator of salvation. Others do belie him still more. They look upon Him as an unloving, severe Being, who had no love to the human race, and could only be made loving by the death and agonies of our Saviour. Now, this is a foul libel upon the fair and glorious grace of God the Father, to whom for ever be honor: for Jesus Christ did not die to make God loving, but he died because God *was* loving.

"Twas not to make Jehovah's love
Toward his people flame,
That Jesus from the throne above,
A suffering man became.

"Twas not the death which he endured,
Nor all the pangs he bore,
That God's eternal love procured,
For God was love before."

Christ was sent into the world by his Father, as the consequence of the Father's affection for his people. Yea, he "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The fact is, that the Father as much decreed salvation, as much effected it, and as much delighted in it, as did either God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit. And when we speak of the Saviour of the world, we must always include in that word, if we speak in a large sense, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, for all these three, as one God, do save us from our sins. The text puts away every hard thought concerning the Father, by telling us that it pleased Jehovah to bruise Jesus Christ. The death of Christ is traceable to God the Father. Let us try if we can see it is so.

1. First it is traceable in decree. God, the one God of heaven and earth, hath the book of destiny entirely in his power. In that book there is nothing written by a stranger's hand. The penmanship of the solemn book of predestination is from beginning to end entirely divine.

"Chained to his throne a volume lies
With all the fates of men,
With every angel's form and size
*Drawn by th' eternal pen.*

No inferior hand hath sketched even so much as the least minute parts of providence. It was all, from its Alpha to its Omega, from its divine preface to its solemn finis, marked out, designed, sketched, and planned by the mind of the all-wise, all-knowing God. Hence, not even Christ's death was exempt from it. He that wings an angel and guides a sparrow, he that protects the hairs of our head from falling prematurely to the ground, was not likely, when he took notice of such little things, to omit in his solemn decrees the greatest wonder of earth's miracles, the death of Christ. No; the blood-stained page of that book, the page which makes both past and future glorious with golden words,—that blood-stained page, I say, was as much written of Jehovah, as any other. He determined that Christ should be born of the Virgin Mary, that he should suffer under Pontius Pilate, that he should descend into Hades, that thence he should rise again, leading captivity captive, and then should reign for ever at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Nay, I know not but that I shall have Scripture for my warrant when I say, that this is the very core of predestination, and that the death of Christ is the very center and main-spring by which God did fashion all his other decrees, making this the bottom and foundation-stone upon which the sacred architecture should be builded. Christ was put to death by the absolute foreknowledge and solemn decree of God the Father, and in this sense "it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief."

2. But a little further, Christ's coming into the world to die was the effect of the Father's will and pleasure. Christ came not into this world unsent. He had laid in Jehovah's bosom from before all worlds, eternally delighting himself in his Father, and being himself his Father's eternal joy. "In the fullness of time" God did rend his Son from his bosom, his only-begotten Son, and freely delivered him up for *us* all. Herein was matchless, peerless love, that the offended judge

should permit his co-equal Son to suffer the pains of death for the redemption of a rebellious people. I want your imaginations for one minute to picture a scene of olden times. There is a bearded patriarch, who rises early in the morning and awakes his son, a young man full of strength, and bids him arise and follow him. They hurry from the house silently and noiselessly, before the mother is awake. They go three days' journey with their men; until they come to the Mount, of which the Lord hath spoken. You know the patriarch. The name of Abraham is always fresh in our memories. On the way, that patriarch speaks not one solitary word to his son. His heart is too full for utterance. He is overwhelmed with grief. God has commanded him to take his son, his only son, and slay him upon the mountain as a sacrifice. They go together; and who shall paint the unutterable anguish of the father's soul, whilst he walks side by side with that beloved son, of whom he is to be the executioner? The third day has arrived; the servants are bidden to stay at the foot of the hill, whilst they go to worship God yonder. Now, can any mind imagine how the father's grief must overflow all the banks of his soul, when, as he walked up that hill-side, his son said to him, "Father, behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" Can you conceive how he stifled his emotions, and, with sobs, exclaimed, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb?" See! the father has communicated to his son the fact that God has demanded his life. Isaac, who might have struggled and escaped from his father, declares that he is willing to die, if God hath decreed it. The father takes his son, binds his hands behind his back, piles up the stones, makes an altar, lays the wood, and has his fire ready. And now where is the artist that can depict the anguish of the father's countenance, when the knife is unsheathed, and he holds it up, ready to slay his son? But here the curtain falls. Now the black scene vanishes at the sound of a voice from heaven. The ram caught in the thicket supplies the substitute, and faith's obedience need go no further. Ah! my brethren, I want to take you from this scene to a far greater one. What faith and obedience made man do, that

love constrained God himself to do. He had but one son, that son his own heart's delight: he covenanted to yield him up for our redemption, nor did he violate his promise; for, when the fullness of time was come, he sent his Son to be born of the Virgin Mary, that he might suffer for the sins of man. O! can ye tell the greatness of that love, which made the everlasting God not only put his Son upon the altar, but actually do the deed, and thrust the sacrificial knife into his Son's heart? Can you think how overwhelming must have been the love of God toward the human race, when he completed in act what Abraham only did in intention? Look ye there, and see the place where his only Son hung dead upon the cross, the bleeding victim of awakened justice! Here is love indeed; and here we see how it was, that it pleased the Father to bruise him.

3. This allows me to push my text just one point further. Beloved, it is not only true that God did design and did permit with willingness the death of Christ; it is moreover, true that the unutterable agonies that clothed the death of the Saviour with superhuman terror, were the effect of the Father's bruising of Christ in very act and deed. There is a martyr in prison: the chains are on his wrists, and yet he sings. It has been announced to him that to-morrow is his burning day. He claps his hands right merrily, and smiles while he says, "It will be sharp work to-morrow, I shall breakfast below on fiery tribulations, but afterward I will sup with Christ. To-morrow is my wedding-day, the day for which I have long panted, when I shall sign the testimony of my life by a glorious death." The time is come; the men with the halberts precede him through the streets. Mark the serenity of the martyr's countenance. He turns to some who look upon him, and exclaims, "I value these iron chains far more than if they had been of gold; it is a sweet thing to die for Christ." There are a few of the boldest of the saints gathered round the stake, and as he unrobes himself, ere he stands upon the fagots to receive his doom, he tells them that it is a joyous thing to be a soldier of Christ, to be allowed to give his body to be burned; and he shakes hands with them, and bids them

"Good by" with merry cheer. One would think he were going to a bridal, rather than to be burned. He steps upon the fagots; the chain is put about his middle; and after a brief word of prayer, as soon as the fire begins to ascend, he speaks to the people with manful boldness. But hark! he sings whilst the fagots are crackling and the smoke is blowing upward. He sings, and when his nether parts are burned, he still goes on chanting sweetly some psalm of old. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

Picture another scene. There is the Saviour going to his cross, all weak and wan with suffering; his soul is sick and sad within him. There is no divine composure there. So sad is his heart, that he faints in the streets. The Son of God faints beneath a cross that many a criminal might have carried. They nail him to the tree. There is no song of praise. He is lifted up in the air, and there he hangs preparatory to his death. You hear no shout of exultation. There is a stern compression of his face, as if unutterable agony were tearing his heart—as if over again Gethsemane were being acted on the cross—as if his soul were still saying, "If it be possible let this cross pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Hark! he speaks. Will he not sing sweeter songs than ever came from martyr's lips? Ah! no; it is an awful wail of woe that can never be imitated. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The martyrs said not that: God was with them. Confessors of old cried not so, when they came to die. They shouted in their fires, and praised God on their racks. Why this? Why doth the Saviour suffer so? Why, beloved, it was because the Father bruised him. That sunshine of God's countenance that has cheered many a dying saint, was withdrawn from Christ; the consciousness of acceptance with God, which has made many a holy man espouse the cross with joy, was not afforded to our Redeemer, and therefore he suffered in thick darkness of mental agony. Read the 22nd Psalm, and learn how Jesus suffered. Pause over the solemn words in the 1st, 2nd, 6th,

and following verses. Underneath the Church are the everlasting arms; but underneath Christ there were no arms at all, but his Father's hand pressed heavily against him; the upper and the nether mill-stones of divine wrath pressed and bruised him; and not one drop of joy or consolation was afforded to him. "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him; *he* hath put him to grief." This, my brethren, was the climax of the Saviour's woe, that his Father turned away from him, and put him to grief.

Thus have I expounded the first part of the subject—the origin of our Saviour's worst sufferings, the Father's pleasure.

II. Our second head must explain the first, or otherwise it is an insolvable mystery how God should bruise his Son, who was perfect innocence, while poor fallible confessors and martyrs have had no such bruising from him in the time of their trial. WHAT WAS THE REASON OF THE SAVIOUR'S SUFFERING? We are told here, "Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." Christ was thus troubled, because his soul was an offering for sin. Now, I am going to be as plain as I can, while I preach over again the precious doctrine of the atonement of Christ Jesus our Lord. Christ was an offering for sin, in the sense of a substitute. God longed to save; but, if such a word may be allowed, Justice tied his hands. "I must be just," said God; "that is a necessity of my nature. Stern as fate, and fast as immutability, is the truth that I must be just. But then my heart desires to forgive—to pass by man's transgressions and pardon them. How can it be done? Wisdom stepped in, and said, "It shall be done thus;" and Love agreed with Wisdom. "Christ Jesus, the Son of God, shall stand *in man's place*, and he shall be offered upon Mount Calvary *instead of man*. Now, mark: when you see Christ going up the Mount of Doom, you see man going there: when you see Christ hurled upon his back, upon the wooden cross, you see the whole company of his elect there; and when you see the nails driven through his blessed hands and feet, it is the whole body of his Church who there, in their substitute, are nailed to the tree. And now the soldiers lift the cross, and

dash it down into the socket prepared for it. His bones are every one of them dislocated, and his body is thus torn with agonies which can not be described. 'Tis manhood suffering there; 'tis the Church suffering there, in the substitute. And when Christ dies, you are to look upon the death of Christ, not as his own dying merely, but as the dying of all those for whom he stood as the scape-goat and the substitute. It is true, Christ died really himself; it is equally true that he did not die for himself, but died as the substitute, in the room, place, and stead of all believers. When you die you will die for yourselves; when Christ died, he died for you, if you be a believer in him. When you pass through the gates of the grave, you go there solitary and alone; you are not the representative of a body of men, but you pass through the gates of death as an individual; but, remember, when Christ went through the sufferings of death, he was the representative Head of all his people.

Understand, then, the sense in which Christ was made a sacrifice for sin. But here lies the glory of this matter. It was as a substitute for sin that he did actually and literally suffer punishment for the sin of all his elect. When I say this, I am not to be understood as using any figure whatever, but as saying actually what I mean. Man for his sin was condemned to eternal fire; when God took Christ to be the substitute, it is true, he did not send Christ into eternal fire, but he poured upon him grief so desperate, that it was a valid payment for even an eternity of fire. Man was condemned to live forever in hell. God did not send Christ forever into hell; but he put on Christ, punishment that was equivalent for that. Although he did not give Christ to drink the actual hells of believers, yet he gave him a *quid pro quo*—something that was equivalent thereunto. He took the cup of Christ's agony, and he put in there, suffering, misery, and anguish such as only God can imagine or dream of, that was the exact equivalent for all the suffering, all the woe, and all the eternal tortures of every one that shall at last stand in heaven, bought with the blood of Christ. And you say, "Did Christ drink it all to its dregs?" Did he suffer it all? Yes, my brethren, he took the cup, and

"At one triumphant draught of love,
He drank damnation dry."

He suffered all the horror of hell: in one pelting shower of iron wrath it fell upon him, with hail-stones bigger than a talent; and he stood until the black cloud had emptied itself completely. There was our debt, huge and immense; he paid the utmost farthing of whatever his people owed; and now there is not so much as a doit or a farthing due to the justice of God in the way of punishment from any believer; and though we owe God gratitude, though we owe much to his love, we owe nothing to his justice; for Christ in that hour took all our sins, past, present, and to come, and was punished for them all there and then, that we might never be punished, because he suffered in our stead. Do you see, then, how it was that God the Father bruised him? Unless he had so done the agonies of Christ could not have been an equivalent for our sufferings; for hell consists in the hiding of God's face from sinners, and if God had not hidden his face from Christ, Christ could not—I see not how he could—have endured any suffering that could have been accepted as an equivalent for the woes and agonies of his people.

Methinks I heard some one say, "Do you mean us to understand this atonement that you have now preached as being a literal fact?" I say, most solemnly, I do. There are in the world many theories of atonement; but I can not see any atonement in any one, except in this doctrine of substitution. Many divines say that Christ did something when he died that enabled God to be just, and yet the Justifier of the ungodly. What that something is they do not tell us. They believe in an atonement made for every body; but then, their atonement is just this. They believe that Judas was atoned for just as much as Peter; they believe that the damned in hell were as much an object of Jesus Christ's satisfaction as the saved in heaven; and though they do not say it in proper words, yet they must mean it, for it is a fair inference, that in the case of multitudes, Christ died in vain, for he died for them all, they say; and yet so ineffectual was his dying for them, that though

he died for them they are damned afterward. Now, such an atonement I despise—I reject it. I may be called Antinomian or Calvinist for preaching a limited atonement; but I had rather believe a limited atonement that is efficacious for all men for whom it was intended, than an universal atonement that is not efficacious for anybody, except the will of man be joined with it. Why, my brethren, if we were only so far atoned for by the death of Christ that any one of us might afterward save himself, Christ's atonement were not worth a farthing, for there is no man of us can save himself—no, not under the gospel; for if I am to be saved by faith, if that faith is to be my own act, unassisted by the Holy Spirit, I am as unable to save myself by faith as to save myself by good works. And after all, though men call this a limited atonement, it is as effectual as their own fallacious and rotten redemptions can pretend to be. But do you know the limit of it? Christ hath bought a "multitude that no man can number." The limit of it is just this: *He hath died for sinners;* whoever in this congregation inwardly and sorrowfully knows himself to be a sinner, Christ died for him; whoever seeks Christ, shall know Christ died for him; for our sense of need of Christ, and our seeking after Christ, are infallible proofs that Christ died for us. And, mark, here is something substantial. The Arminian says Christ died for him; and then, poor man, he has but small consolation therefrom, for he says, "Ah! Christ died for me; that does not prove much. It only proves I may be saved if I mind what I am after. I may perhaps forget myself; I may run into sin and I may perish. Christ has done a good deal for me, but not quite enough, unless I do something." But the man who receives the Bible as it is, he says, "Christ died for me, then my eternal life is sure. I know," says he, "that Christ can not be punished in a man's stead, and the man be punished afterwards. No," says he, "I believe in a just God, and if God be just, he will not punish Christ first, and then punish men afterwards. No; my Saviour died, and now I am free from every demand of God's vengeance, and I can walk through this world secure; no thunderbolt can smite me, and I can die absolutely certain

that for me there is no flame of hell, and no pit digged; for Christ, my ransom, suffered in my stead, and, therefore, am I clean delivered. Oh! glorious doctrine! I would wish to die preaching it! What better testimony can we bear to the love and faithfulness of God than the testimony of a substitution eminently satisfactory for all them that believe on Christ? I will here quote the testimony of that pre-eminently profound divine, Dr. John Owen:—"Redemption is the freeing of a man from misery by the intervention of a ransom. Now, when a ransom is paid for the liberty of a prisoner, does not justice demand that he should have and enjoy the liberty so purchased for him by a valuable consideration? If I should pay a thousand pounds for a man's deliverance from bondage to him that retains him, who hath power to set him free, and is contented with the price I give, were it not injurious to me and the poor prisoner that his deliverance be not accomplished? Can it possibly be conceived that there should be a redemption of men, and those men not redeemed? That a price should be paid and the ransom not consummated? Yet all this must be made true, and innumerable other absurdities, if universal redemption be asserted. A price is paid for all, yet few delivered; the redemption of all consummated, yet few of them redeemed; the judge satisfied, the jailer conquered, and yet the prisoners inthralled! Doubtless '*universal*,' and '*redemption*,' where the greatest part of men perish, are as irreconcilable as '*Roman*' and '*Catholic*.' If there be a universal redemption of all, then all men are redeemed. If they are redeemed, then are they delivered from all misery, virtually or actually, whereunto they were inthralled, and that by the intervention of a ransom. Why, then, are not all saved? In a word, the redemption wrought by Christ being the full deliverance of the persons redeemed from all misery, wherein they were inwrapped, by the price of his blood, it can not possibly be conceived to be universal unless all be saved: so that the opinion of the Universalists is unsuitable to redemption."

I pause once more; for I hear some timid soul say—"But, sir, I am afraid I am not elect, and if so, Christ did not die for me." Stop, sir! Are you a sinner? Do you feel it?

Has God, the Holy Spirit, made you feel that you are a lost sinner? Do you want salvation? If you do not want it it is no hardship that it is not provided for you; but if you really feel that you want it, you are God's elect. If you have a desire to be saved, a desire given you by the Holy Spirit, that desire is a token for good. If you have begun believingly to pray for salvation, you have therein a sure evidence that you are saved. Christ was punished for you. And if now you can say,

> "Nothing in my hands I bring,
> Simply to the cross I cling,"

you may be as sure you are God's elect as you are sure of your own existence; for this is the infallible proof of election—a sense of need and a thirst after Christ.

III. And now I have just to conclude by noticing the BLESSED EFFECTS of the Saviour's death. On this I shall be very brief.

The *first* effect of the Saviour's death is, "He shall see his seed." Men shall be saved by Christ. Men have offspring by life; Christ had an offspring by death. Men die and leave their children, and they see not their seed; Christ lives, and every day sees his seed brought into the unity of the faith. One effect of Christ's death is the salvation of multitudes. Mark, not a chance salvation. When Christ died the angel did not say, as some have represented him, "Now by his death many *may* be saved;" the word of prophecy had quenched all "buts" and "peradventures;" "By his righteousness he *shall* justify many." There was not so much as an atom of chance-work in the Saviour's death. Christ knew what he bought when he died; and what he bought he will have—that, and no more, and no less. There is no effect of Christ's death that is left to peradventure. "Shalls" and "wills" made the covenant fast: Christ's bloody death shall effect its solemn purpose. Every heir of grace shall meet around the throne,

> "Shall bless the wonders of his grace,
> And make his glories known."

The *second* effect of Christ's death is, "He shall prolong his days." Yes, bless his name, when he died he did not end his life. He could not long be held a prisoner in the tomb. The third morning came, and the conqueror, rising from his sleep burst the iron bonds of death, and came forth from his prison-house, no more to die. He waited his forty days, and then, with shouts of sacred song, he "led captivity captive, and ascended up on high." "In that he died he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth he liveth unto God," no more to die.

"Now by his Father's side he sits,
And there triumphant reigns,"

the conqueror over death and hell.

And, *last* of all, by Christ's death the Father's good pleasure was effected and prospered. God's good pleasure is, that that this world shall one day be totally redeemed from sin; God's good pleasure is, that this poor planet, so long swathed in darkness, shall soon shine out in brightness, like a new-born sun. Christ's death hath done it. The stream that flowed from his side on Calvary shall cleanse the world from all its blackness. That hour of mid-day darkness was the rising of a new sun of righteousness, which shall never cease to shine upon the earth. Yes, the hour is coming when swords and spears shall be forgotten things—when the harness of war and the pageantry of pomp shall all be laid aside for the food of the worm or the contemplation of the curious. The hour approacheth when old Rome shall shake upon her seven hills, when Mahommed's crescent shall wane to wax no more, when all the gods of the heathens shall lose their thrones and be cast out to the moles and the bats; and then, when from the equator to the poles Christ shall be honored, the Lord paramount of earth, when from land to land, from the river even to the ends of the earth, one King shall reign, one shout shall be raised, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." Then, my brethren, shall it be seen what Christ's death has accomplished, for "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

# SERMON XIV.

## A CALL TO THE UNCONVERTED.

'For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."—GALATIANS iii. 10.

My hearer, art thou a believer, or no? for, according to thine answer to that question, must be the style in which I shall address thee to-night. I would ask thee as a great favor to thine own soul, this evening to divest thyself of the thought that thou art sitting in a chapel, and hearing a minister who is preaching to a large congregation. Think thou art sitting in thine own house, in thine own chair, and think that I am standing by thee, with thy hand in mine, and am speaking personally to thee, and to thee alone; for that is how I desire to preach this night to each of my hearers—one by one. I want thee, then, in the sight of God, to answer me this all-important and solemn question before I begin—Art thou in Christ, or art thou not? Hast thou fled for refuge to him who is the only hope for sinners? or art thou yet a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, ignorant of God, and of his holy Gospel? Come—be honest with thine own heart, and let thy conscience say yes, or no, for one of these two things thou art to night—thou art either under the wrath of God, or thou art delivered from it. Thou art to-night either an heir of wrath, or an inheritor of the kingdom of grace. Which of these two? Make no "ifs" or "ahs" in your answer Answer straight forward to thine own soul; and if there be any doubt whatever about it, I beseech thee rest not till that doubt be resolved. Do not take advantage of that doubt to thyself, but rather take a disadvantage from it. Depend upon it, thou art more likely to be wrong than thou art to be right;

and now put thyself in the scale, and if thou dost not kick the beam entirely, but if thou hangest between the two, and thou sayest, "I know not which," better that thou shouldst decide for the worst, though it should grieve thyself, than that thou shouldst decide for the better, and be deceived, and so go on presumptuously until the pit of hell shall wake thee from thy self-deception. Canst thou, then, with one hand upon God's holy word, and the other upon thine own heart, lift thine eye to heaven, and say, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see; I know that I have passed from death unto life; I am not now what I once was; 'I the chief of sinners am, but Jesus died for me.' And if I be not awfully deceived, I am this night "A sinner saved by blood, a monument of grace?'" My brother, God speed you; the blessing of the Most High be with you. My text has no thunders in it for you. Instead of this verse, turn to the 13th, and there read your inheritance—"Christ hath redeemed *us* from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." So Christ was cursed in the stead of you, and you are secure, if you are truly converted, and really a regenerated child of God.

But my hearer, I am solemnly convinced that a large proportion of this assembly dare not say so; and thou to-night (for I am speaking personally to thee), remember that thou art one of those who dare not say this, for thou art a stranger to the grace of God. Thou durst not lie before God, and thine own conscience, therefore thou dost honestly say, "I know I was never regenerated; I am now what I always was, and that is the most I can say." Now, with you I have to deal, and I charge you by him who shall judge the quick and the dead, before whom you and I must soon appear, listen to the words I speak, for they may be the last warning you shall ever hear, and I charge my own soul also, be thou faithful to these dying men, lest haply on thy skirts at last should be found the blood of souls, and thou thyself shouldst be a castaway. O God, make us faithful this night and give the hearing ear, and the retentive memory, and the conscience touched by the Spirit, for Jesus' sake.

First, to-night we shall *try the prisoner;* secondly, we shall *declare his sentence;* and thirdly, if we find him confessing and penitent, we shall *proclaim his deliverance;* but not unless we find him so.

I. First, then, we are about to TRY THE PRISONER.

The text says—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Unconverted man, are you guilty, or not guilty? Have you continued "in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them?" Methinks you will not dare to plead, "Not guilty." But I will suppose for one moment that you are bold enough to do so. So, then, sir, you mean to assert that you have continued "in all things which are written in the book of the law." Surely the very reading of the law would be enough to convince thee that thou art in error. Dost thou know what the law is? Why, I will give thee what I may call the outside of it, but remember that within it there is a broader spirit than the mere words. Hear thou these words of the law—"*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*" What! hast thou never loved anything better than God? Hast thou never made a god of thy belly, or of thy business, or of thy family, or of thine own person? Oh! surely thou durst not say thou art guiltless here. "*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.*" What! hast thou never in thy life set up anything in the place of God? If thou hast not, I have, full many a time. And I wot, if conscience would speak truly, it would say, "Man, thou hast been a mammon worshiper, thou hast been a belly worshiper, thou hast bowed down before gold and silver; thou hast cast thyself down before honor, thou hast bowed before pleasure, thou hast made a god of thy drunkenness, a god of thy lust, a god of thy uncleanness, a god of thy pleasures!" Wilt thou dare to say that thou hast never taken *the name of the Lord thy God in vain?* If thou hast never sworn profanely, yet surely in common conversation thou hast sometimes made use of God's name when thou oughtest not

to have done so. Say, hast thou always hallowed that most holy name? Hast thou never called upon God without necessity? Hast thou never read his book with a trifling spirit? Hast thou never heard his gospel without paying reverence to it? Surely thou art guilty here. And as for that fourth commandment, which relates to the keeping of the Sabbath—"*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy*,"—hast thou never broken it? Oh, shut thy mouth and plead guilty, for these four commandments were enough to condemn thee! "*Honor thy father and thy mother.*" What! wilt thou say thou has kept that? Hast thou never been disobedient in thy youth? Hast thou never kicked against a mother's love, and striven against a father's rebuke? Turn over a page of your history till you come to your childhood; see if you cannot find it written there; ay, and your manhood too may confess that you have not always spoken to your parents as you should, or always treated them with that honor they deserved, and which God commanded you to give unto them. "*Thou shalt not kill;*" you may never have killed any, but have you never been angry? He that is angry with his brother is a murderer; thou art guilty here. "*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*" Mayhap thou hast committed unclean things, and art here this very day stained with lust; but if thou hast been never so chaste, I am sure thou hast not been quite guiltless, when the Master says, "He that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart." Has no lascivious thought crossed thy mind? Has no impurity ever stirred thy imagination? Surely if thou shouldest dare to say so, thou wouldest be brazen-faced with impudence. And hast thou never stolen? "*Thou shalt not steal;*" you are here in the crowd to-night with the product of your theft mayhap, you have done the deed, you have committed robbery; but if you have been never so honest, yet surely there have been times in which you have felt an inclination to defraud your neighbor, and there may have been some petty, or mayhap some gross frauds which you have secretly and silently committed, on which the law of the land could not lay its hand, but which

nevertheless, was a breach of this law. And who dare say he has not borne *false witness against his neighbor?* Have we never repeated a story to our neighbor's disadvantage, which was untrue? Have we never misconstrued his motives? Have we never misinterpreted his designs? And who among us can dare to say that he is guiltless of the last—"*Thou shalt not covet?*" for we have all desired to have more than God has given us; and at times our wandering heart has lusted after things which God has not bestowed upon us. Why, to plead not guilty, is to plead your own folly; for verily, my brethren, the very reading of the law is enough, when blessed by the Spirit, to make us cry, "Guilty, O Lord, guilty."

But one cries, "I shall not plead guilty, for though I am well aware that I have not continued 'in all things which are written in the book of the law,' yet I have done the best I could." That is a lie—before God a falsehood. You have not! You have not done the best you could. There have been many occasions upon which you might have done better. Will that young man dare to tell me that he is doing the best he can *now?* that he cannot refrain from laughter in the house of God? It may be possible that it is hard for him to do so, but it is just possible he could, if he pleased, refrain from insulting his Maker to his face. Surely we have none of us done the best we could. At every period, at every time, there have been opportunities of escape from temptation. If we had had no freedom to escape from the sin, there might have been some excuse for it; but there have been turning points in our history when we might have decided for right or for wrong, but when we have chosen the evil and have eschewed the good, and have turned into that path which leadeth unto hell.

"Ah, but," saith another, "I declare, sir, that while I have broken that law, without a doubt, I have been no worse than my fellow-creatures." And a sorry argument is that, for what availeth it thee? To be damned in a crowd is no more comfortable than to be damned alone. It is true, thou hast been no worse than thy fellow-creatures, but this will be of very poor service to thee. When the wicked are cast into

hell, it will be very little comfort to thee that God shall say, "Depart ye cursed" to a thousand with thee. Remember, God's curse, when it shall sweep a nation into hell, shall be as much felt by every individual of the crowd, as if there were but that one man to be punished. God is not like our earthly judges. If their courts were glutted with prisoners, they might be inclined to pass over many a case lightly; but not so with Jehovah. He is so infinite in his mind, that the abundance of criminals will not seem to be any difficulty with him. He will deal with thee as severely and as justly as if there were ne'er another sinner in all the world. And pray, what hast thou to do with other men's sins? Thou art not responsible for them. God made thee to stand or fall by thyself. According to thine own deeds thou shalt be judged. The harlot's sin may be grosser than thine, but thou wilt not be condemned for her iniquities. The murderer's guilt may far exceed thy transgressions, but thou wilt not be damned for the murderer. Religion is a thing between God and thine own soul, O man; and therefore, I do beseech thee, do not look upon thy neighbor's, but upon thine own heart.

"Ay, but," cries another, "I have very many times striven to keep the law, and I think I have done so for a little." Hear ye the sentence read again—"Cursed is every one that *continueth* not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Oh! sirs; it is not some hectic flush upon the cheek of consumptive irresolution that God counts to be the health of obedience. It is not some slight obedience for an hour that God will accept at the day of judgment. He saith "continueth;" and unless from my early childhood to the day when my gray hairs descend into the tomb, I shall have continued to be obedient to God, I must be condemned. Unless I have from the first dawn of reason, when I first began to be responsible, obediently served God, until, like a shock of corn, I am gathered into my Master's garner, salvation by works must be impossible to me, and I must (standing on my own footing), be condemned. It is not, I say, some slight obedience that will save the soul. Thou hast not con-

tinued "in all things which are written in the book of the law," and therefore thou art condemned.

"But," says another, "there are many things I have not done, but still I have been very virtuous." Poor excuse that, also. Suppose thou hast been virtuous; suppose thou hast avoided many vices: turn to my text. It is not my word, but God's—turn to it—"*all things*." It does not say "*some things*."—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all things* which are written in the book of the law to do them." Now, hast thou performed all virtues? Hast thou shunned all vices? Dost thou stand up and plead, "I never was a drunkard?"—Yet shalt thou be damned, if thou hast been a fornicator. Dost thou reply, "I never was unclean?" Yet thou hast broken the Sabbath. Dost thou plead guiltless of that charge? Dost thou declare thou hast never broken the Sabbath? Thou hast taken God's name in vain, hast thou not? Somewhere or other God's law can smite thee. It is certain (let thy conscience now speak and affirm what I assert)—it is certain thou hast not continued "in *all things* which are written in the book of the law." Nay, more, I do not believe thou hast even continued in any one commandment of God to the full, for the commandment is exceeding broad. It is not the overt act, merely, that will damn a man; it is the thought, the imagination, the conception of sin, that is sufficient to ruin a soul. Remember, my dear hearers, I am speaking now God's own word, not a harsh doctrine of my own. If you had never committed one single act of sin, yet the thought of sin, the imagination of it would be enough to sweep your soul to hell for ever. If you had been born in a cell, and had never been able to come out into the world, either to commit acts of lasciviousness, murder, or robbery, yet the thought of evil in that lone cell might be enough to cast your soul for ever from the face of God. Oh! there is no man here that can hope to escape. We must every one of us bow our heads before God, and cry, "Guilty, Lord, guilty—every one of us guilty—'Cursed is *every one* that continueth not in *all things* which are written in the book of the law to do them.'" When I look into thy face, O law, my spirit shudders. When I

hear thy thunders, my heart is melted like wax in the midst of my bowels. How can I endure thee? If I am to be tried at last for my life, surely I shall need no judge, for I shall be mine own swift accuser, and my conscience shall be a witness to condemn.

I think I need not enlarge further on this point. O thou that art out of Christ, and without God, dost thou not stand condemned before him? Off with all thy masks, and away with all excuses; let every one of us turn our idle pretences to the wind. Unless we have the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ to cover us, we must every one of us acknowledge that this sentence shuts the gates of heaven against us, and only prepares us for the flames of perdition.

II. Thus have I singled out the charater, and he is found guilty; now I have TO DECLARE THE SENTENCE.

God's ministers love not such work as this. I would rather stand in this pulpit and preach twenty sermons on the love of Jesus, than one like this. It is very seldom that I meddle with the theme, because I do not know that it is often necessary; but I feel that if these things were kept altogether in the background, and the law were not preached, the Master would not own the gospel; for he will have both preached in their measure, and each must have its proper prominence. Now, therefore, hear me whilst I sorrowfully tell you what is the sentence passed upon all of you who this night are out of Christ. Sinner, thou art cursed to-night. *Thou art cursed*, not by some wizard whose fancied spell can only frighten the ignorant. Thou art cursed—not cursed by some earthly monarch who could turn his troops against thee, and swallow up thy house and thy patrimony quick. Cursed! Oh! what a thing a curse is anyhow! What an awful thing is the curse of a father. We have heard of fathers, driven to madness by the undutiful and ungracious conduct of their children, who have lifted their hands to heaven, and have implored a curse, a withering curse upon their children. We can not excuse the parent's mad and rash act. God forbid we should exempt him from sin; but oh, a father's curse must be awful. I can not think what it must be to be cursed by him that did beget me. Sure, it would put out the sunlight of my history for

ever, if it were deserved. But to be cursed of God—I have no words with which to tell what that must be. "Oh, no," you say, "that is a thing of the future; we do not care about the curse of God; it does not fall upon us now." Nay, soul, but it does. The wrath of God *abideth* on you even now. You have not yet come to know the fullness of that curse, but you are cursed this very hour. You are not yet in hell; not yet has God been pleased to shut up the bowels of his compassion, and cast you for ever from his presence; but notwithstanding all that, you are cursed. Turn to the passage in the book of Deuteronomy, and see how the curse is a present thing upon the sinner.

In the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, at the 15th verse, we read all this as the sentence of the sinner: "Cursed shalt thou be in the city"—where you carry on your business God will curse you. "Cursed shalt thou be in the fields"—where you take your recreation; where you walk abroad, there shall the curse reach you. "Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out." There are some men upon whom this curse is very visible. Whatever they do is cursed. They get riches, but there is God's curse with the riches. I would not have some men's gold for all the stars, though they were gold: and if I might have all the wealth of the world, if I must have the miser's greed with it, I would rather be poor than have it. There are some men who are visibly cursed. Don't you see the drunkard? He is cursed, let him go where he may. When he goes into his house, his little children run up stairs to bed, for they are afraid to see their own father; and when they grow a little older, they begin to drink just as he did, and they will stand and imitate him; and they too will begin to swear, so that he is cursed in the fruit of his body. He thought it was not so bad for him to be drunk and to swear; but O what a pang shoots through the father's conscience, if he has a conscience at all, when he sees his child following his footsteps. Drunkenness brings such a curse upon a man, that he can not

enjoy what he eats. He is cursed in his basket, cursed in his store. And truly, though one vice may seem to develop the curse more than others, all sin brings the curse, though we can not always see it. O! thou that art out of God, and out of Christ, and a stranger to Jesus, thou art cursed where thou sittest, cursed where thou standest; cursed is the bed thou liest on; cursed is the bread thou eatest; cursed is the air thou breathest. All is cursed to thee. Go where thou mayest, thou art a cursed man. Ah! that is a fearful thought. O! there are some of you that are cursed to-night. O, that a man should say that of his brethren! but we must say it, or be unfaithful to your poor dying souls. O! would to God that some poor soul in this place would say, "Then I am cursed to-night; I am cursed of God, and cursed of his holy angels—cursed! cursed! cursed!—for I am under the law." I do think, God the Spirit blessing it, it wants nothing more to slay our carelessness than that one word—"cursed!" "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

But now, my hearer, thou that art in this state, impenitent and unbelieving, I have more work to do before I close. Remember, the curse that men have in this life is as nothing compared with the curse that is to come upon them hereafter. In a few short years, you and I must die. Come, friend, I will talk to you personally again—young man, we shall soon grow old, or, perhaps, we shall die before that time, and we shall lie upon our bed—the last bed upon which we shall ever sleep—we shall wake from our last slumber to hear the doleful tidings that there is no hope; the physician will feel our pulse, and solemnly assure our relatives that it is all over! And we shall lie in that still room, where all is hushed except the ticking of the clock, and the weeping of our wife and children; and we must die. O! how solemn will it be that hour when we must struggle with that enemy, Death! The death-rattle is in our throat—we can scarce articulate—we try to speak; the death-glaze is on the eye: Death hath put his fingers on those windows of the body, and shut out the light for ever; the hands well-nigh refuse to lift them

selves, and there we are, close on the borders of the grave! Ah! that moment, when the Spirit sees its destiny; that moment, of all moments the most solemn, when the soul looks through the bars of its cage, upon the world to come! No, I can not tell you how the spirit feels, if it be an ungodly spirit, when it sees a fiery throne of judgment, and hears the thunders of Almighty wrath, while there is but a moment between it and hell. I can not picture to you what must be the fright which men will feel, when they realize what they often heard of! Ah! it is a fine thing for you to laugh at me to-night. When you go away, it will be a very fine thing to crack a joke concerning what the preacher said; to talk to one another, and make merry with all this. But when you are lying on your death-bed, you will not laugh. Now, the curtain is drawn, you can not see the things of the future, it is a very fine thing to be merry. When God has removed that curtain, and you learn the solemn reality, you will not find it in your hearts to trifle. Ahab, on his throne laughed at Micaiah. You never read that Ahab laughed at Micaiah when the arrow was sticking between the joints of his harness. In Noah's time, they laughed at the old man; they called him a grey-headed fool, I doubt not, because he told them that God was about to destroy the earth with a flood. But ah! ye scorners, ye did not laugh in that day when the cataracts were falling from heaven, and when God had unloosed the doors of the great deep, and bidden all the hidden waters leap upon the surface; then ye knew that Noah was right. And when ye come to die, mayhap ye will not laugh at me. You will say, when you lie there, "I remember such-and-such a night I strolled into Park street; I heard a man talk very solemnly; I thought at the time I did not like it, but I knew he was in earnest, I am quite certain that he meant good for me; oh, that I had hearkened to his advice; oh, that I had regarded his words! What would I give to hear him again!" Ah! it was not long ago that a man who had laughed and mocked at me full many a time, went down one Sabbath day to Brighton, to spend his day in the excursion—he came back that night to die! On Monday morning, when

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he was dying, who do you suppose he wanted? He wanted Mr. Spurgeon! the man he had laughed at always; he wanted him to come and tell him the way to heaven, and point him to the Saviour. And although I was glad enough to go, it was doleful work to talk to a man who had just been Sabbath-breaking, spending his time in the service of Satan, and had come home to die. And die he did, without a Bible in his house, without having one prayer offered for him except that prayer which I alone did offer at his bedside. Ah! it is strange how the sight of a death-bed may be blessed to the stimulating of our zeal. I stood some year or so ago, by the bedside of a poor boy, about sixteen years of age, who had been drinking himself to death, in a drinking bout, about a week before, and when I talked to him about sin and right eousness, and judgmeet to come, I knew he trembled, and I thought that he had laid hold on Jesus. When I came down from those stairs, after praying for him many a time, and trying to point him to Jesus, and having but a faint hope of his ultimate salvation, I thought to myself, O God! I would that I might preach every hour, and every moment of the day, the unsearchable riches of Christ; for what an awful thing it is to die without a Saviour. And then, I thought how many a time I had stood in the pulpit, and had not preached in earnest as I ought to have done; how I have coldly told out the tale of the Saviour, when I ought to have wept very showers of tears, in overwhelming emotion. I have gone to my bed full many a season, and have wept myself to sleep, because I have not preached as I have desired, and it will be even so to-night. But, oh, the wrath to come! the wrath to come! the wrath to come!

My hearers, the matters I now talk of are no dreams, no frauds, no whims, no old wives' stories. These are realities, and you will soon know them. O sinner, thou that hast not continued in all things written in the book of the law; thou that hast no Christ; the day is coming when these things will stand before thee, as dread, solemn, real things. And then; ah! then; ah! then; ah! then what wilt thou do?—"And after death *the judgment*."—O, can ye picture—

"The pomp of that tremendous day,
When Christ with clouds shall come."

I think I see that terrible day. The bell of time has tolled the last day. Now comes the funeral of damned souls. Your body has just started up from the grave, and you unwind your cerements, and you look up. What is that I see? O! what is that I hear? I hear one dread, tremendous blast, that shakes the pillars of heaven, and makes the firmament reel with affright; the trump, the trump, the trump of the archangel shakes creation's utmost bound. You look and wonder. Suddenly a voice is heard, and shrieks from some, and songs from others—he comes—he comes—he comes; and every eye must see him. There he is; the throne is set upon a cloud, which is white as alabaster. There he sits. 'Tis He, the Man that died on Calvary—I see his pierced hands—but ah, how changed! No thorn-crown now. He stood at Pilate's bar, but now the whole earth must stand at his bar. But hark! the trumpet sounds again: the Judge opens the book, there is silence in heaven, a solemn silence: the universe is still. "Gather mine elect together, and my redeemed from the four winds of heaven." Swiftly they are gathered. As with a lightning flash, the angel's wing divides the crowd. Here are the righteous all in-gathered; and sinner, there art thou on the left hand, left out, left to abide the burning sentence of eternal wrath.

Hark! the harps of heaven play sweet melodies; but to you they bring no joy, though the angels are repeating the Saviour's welcome to his saints. "Come ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world." You have had that moment's respite, and now his face is gathering clouds of wrath, the thunder is on his brow; he looks on you that have despised him, you that scoffed his grace, that scorned his mercy, you that broke his Sabbath, you that mocked his cross, you that would not have him to reign over you; and with a voice louder than ten thousand thunders, he cries, "Depart, ye cursed." And then——No, I will not follow you. I will not tell of quenchless flames: I

will not talk of miseries of the body, and tortures for the spirit. But hell is terrible; damnation is doleful. Oh, escape! escape! Escape, lest haply, being where you are, you should have to learn what the horrors of eternity must mean, in the gulf of everlasting perdition. "Cursed is the man that hath not continued in *all things* that are written in the book of the law to do them."

III. DELIVERANCE PROCLAIMED.

"You have condemned us all," cries one. Yes, but not I —God has done it. Are you condemned? Do you feel you are to-night? Come, again, let me take thee by the hand, my brother: yes, I can look round upon the whole of this assembly, and I can say, there is not one now in this place whom I do not love as a brother. If I speak severely unto any of you, it is that you may know the right. My heart, and my whole spirit are stirred for you. My harshest words are far more full of love than the smooth words of soft-speaking ministers, who say, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace. Do you think it is any pleasure to me to preach like this? Oh? I had far rather be preaching of Jesus; his sweet, his glorious person, and his all-sufficient righteousness. Now, come, we will have a sweet word before we have done. Do you feel you are condemned? Do you say, "O God, I confess thou wouldest be just, if thou shouldest do all this to me?" Dost thou feel thou canst never be saved by thine own works, but that thou art utterly condemned through sin? Dost thou hate sin? Dost thou sincerely repent? Then, let me tell thee how thou mayest escape.

Men and brethren, Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was crucified, dead, and buried; he is now risen, and he sitteth on the right hand of God, where he also maketh intercession for us. He came into this world to save sinners, by his death. He saw that poor sinners were cursed: he took the curse on his own shoulders, and he delivered us from it. Now, if God has cursed Christ for any man, he will not curse that man again. You ask me, then, "Was Christ cursed for me?" Answer me this question, and I will tell you—Has God the Spirit taught you that you are accursed? Has he made you

feel the bitterness of sin? Has he made you cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner?" Then, my dear friend, Christ was cursed for you; and you are not cursed. You are not cursed now. Christ was cursed for you. Be of good cheer; if Christ was cursed for you, you can not be cursed again. "Oh!" says one, "if I could but think he was cursed for me." Do you see him bleeding on the tree? Do you see his hands and feet all dripping gore? Look unto him, poor sinner. Look no longer at thyself, nor at thy sin; look unto him, and be saved. All he asks thee to do is to look, and even that he will help thee to do. Come to him, trust him, believe on him. God the Holy Spirit has taught you that you are a condemned sinner. Now, I beseech you, hear this word and believe it: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Oh, can you say, "I believe this Word—it is true—blessed be his dear name; it is true to me, for whatever I may not be, I know that I am a sinner; the sermon of this night convinces me of that, if there were nothing else; and, good Lord, thou knowest when I say I am a sinner, I do not mean what I used to mean by that word. I mean that I am a real sinner. I mean that if thou shouldest damn me, I deserve it; if thou shouldest cast me from thy presence forever, it is only what I have merited richly. O my Lord I am a sinner; I am a hopeless sinner, unless thou savest me; I am a helpless sinner, unless thou dost deliver me. I have no hope in my self-righteousness; and Lord, I bless thy name, there is one thing else, I am a sorrowful sinner, for sin grieves me; I can not rest, I am troubled. Oh, if I could get rid of sin, I would be holy, even as God is holy. Lord, I believe." But I hear an objector cry out, "What, sir, believe that Christ died for me simply because I am a sinner!" Yes; even so. "No, sir; but if I had a little righteousness; if I could pray well, I should then think Christ died for me." No, that would not be faith at all, that would be self-confidence. Faith believes in Christ when it sees sin to be black, and trusts in him to remove it all. Now, poor sinner, with all thy sin about thee, take this promise in thy hands, go home to-night, or if thou

canst, do it before thou gettest home—go home, I say, up stairs, alone, down by the bed-side, and pour out thine heart, "O Lord, it is all true that that man said; I am condemned, and Lord, I deserve it. O Lord, I have tried to be better, and I have done nothing with it all, but have only grown worse. O Lord, I have slighted thy grace, I have despised thy gospel: I wonder thou hast not damned me years ago; Lord, I marvel at myself, that thou sufferest such a base wretch as I am to live at all. I have despised a mother's teaching, I have forgotten a father's prayers. Lord, I have forgotten thee; I have broken thy Sabbath, taken thy name in vain. I have done everything that is wrong; and if thou dost condemn me, what can I say? Lord, I am dumb before thy presence. I have nothing to plead. But Lord, I come to tell thee to-night, thou hast said in the Word of God, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Lord, I come: my only plea is that thou hast said, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.' Lord, I am a sinner; he came to save *me;* I trust in it—sink or swim—Lord, this is my only hope: I cast away every other, and hate myself to think I ever should have had any other. Lord, I rely on Jesus only. Do but save me, and though I can not hope by my future life to blot out my past sin, O Lord, I will ask of thee to give me a new heart and a right spirit, that from this time forth even for ever I may run in the way of thy commandments: for, Lord, I desire nothing so much as to be thy child. Thou knowest, O Lord, I would give all, if thou wouldest but love me; and I am encouraged to think that thou dost love me; for my heart feels so. I am guilty, but I should never have known that I was guilty, if thou hadst not taught it to me. I am vile, but I never should have known my vileness, unless thou hadst revealed it. Surely, thou wilt not destroy me, O God, after having taught me this. If thou dost, thou art just, but,

> 'Save a trembling sinner, Lord,
> Whose hopes still hovering round thy Word,
> Would light on some sweet promise there;
> Some sure support against despair."

If you can not pray such a long prayer as that, I tell you what to go home and say. Say this, "Lord Jesus, I know I am nothing at all; be thou my precious all in all."

Oh, I trust in God there will be some to-night that will be able to pray like that, and if it be so, ring, the bells of heaven; sing, ye seraphim; shout, ye redeemed; for the Lord hath done it, and glory be unto his name, for ever and ever.

# SERMON XV.

## THE WARNING NEGLECTED.

'He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him.—EZEKIEL, xxxiii. 5.

In all worldly things, men are always enough awake to understand their own interests. There is scarce a merchant who reads the paper, who does not read it in some way or other, with a view to his own personal concerns. If he finds that by the rise or fall of the markets, he will be either a gainer or loser, that part of the day's news will be the most important to him. In politics, in everything, in fact, that concerns temporal affairs, personal interest usually leads the van. Men will always be looking out for themselves, and personal and home interests will generally engross the major part of their thoughts. But in religion, it is otherwise. In religion men love far rather to believe abstract doctrines, and to talk of general truths, than the searching inquiries which examine their own personal interest in it. You will hear many men admire the preacher who deals in generalities, but when he comes to press home searching questions, by-and-by they are offended. If we stand and declare general facts, such as the universal sinnership of mankind, or the need of a Saviour, they will give an assent to our doctrine, and possibly they may retire greatly delighted with the discourse, because it has not affected them; but how often will our audience gnash their teeth, and go away in a rage, because, like the Pharisees with Jesus, they perceive, concerning a faithful minister, that he spoke of *them*. And yet, my brethren, how foolish this is. If in all other matters we like personalities—if in everything else we look to our own concerns, how much more should we do so in religion? for, surely, every man

must give an account for himself, at the day of judgment. We must die alone; we must rise at the day of resurrection one by one, and each one for himself must appear before the bar of God; and each one must either have said to him, as an individual, "Come ye blessed;" or else, he must be appalled with the thundering sentence, "Depart, ye cursed." If there were such a thing as national salvation; if it could be possible that we could be saved in the gross and in the bulk, that so, like the sheaves of corn, the few weeds that may grow with the stubble, would be gathered in for the sake of the wheat, then, indeed, it might not be so foolish for us to neglect our own personal interests; but if the sheep must, every one of them, pass under the hand of him that telleth them, if every man must stand in his own person before God, to be tried for his own acts—by everything that is rational, by everything that conscience would dictate, and self-interest would command, let us each of us look to our own selves, that we be not deceived, and that we find not ourselves, at last, miserably cast away.

Now, this morning, by God's help, I shall labor to be personal, and whilst I pray for the rich assistance of the Divine Spirit, I will also ask one thing of each person here present—I would ask of every Christian that he would lift up a prayer to God, that the service may be blessed; and I ask of every other person that he will please to understand that I am preaching *to him*, and *at him;* and if there be anything that is personal and pertinent to his own case, I beseech him, as for life and death, to let it have its full weight with him, and not begin to think of his neighbor, to whom perhaps it may be even more pertinent, but whose business certainly does not concern him.

The text is a solemn one—"He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning: his blood shall be upon him." The first head is this—*the warning was all that could be desired*—"he heard the sound of the trumpet." Secondly, *the excuses for not attending to the startling warning are all of them both frivolous and wicked:* and therefore, in the third place, *the consequences of inattention must be terrible, because man's blood must then be on his own head.*

I. First, then, THE WARNING WAS ALL THAT COULD BE

DESIRED. When in time of war an army is attacked in the night, and cut off and destroyed whilst asleep, if it were impossible for them to be aware of the attack, and if they had made all diligence in placing their sentinels, but nevertheless the foe were so wary as to destroy them, we should weep; we should attach no blame to any one, but should deeply regret, and should give to that host our fullest pity. But if, on the other hand, they had posted their sentinels, and the sentinels were wide awake, and gave to the sleepy soldiers every warning that could be desired, but nevertheless, the army were cut off, although we might for common humanity regret the loss thereof, yet at the same time we should be obliged to say, if they were foolish enough to sleep when the sentinels had warned them; if they folded their arms in presumptuous sloth, after they had sufficient and timely notice of the progress of their blood-thirsty enemy, then in their dying, we cannot pity them: their blood must rest upon their own heads. So, it is with you. If men perish under an unfaithful ministry, and have not been sufficiently warned to escape from the wrath to come, the Christian may pity them, yea, and methinks, even when they stand before the bar of God, although the fact of their not having been warned will not fully excuse them, yet it will go far to diminish their eternal miseries, which otherwise might have fallen upon their heads; for we know it is more tolerable for unwarned Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than it is for any city, or any nation that has had the Gospel proclaimed in its ears. My brethren, if on the other hand, we have been warned, if our ministers have been faithful, if they have aroused our conscience, and have constantly and earnestly called our attention to the fact of the wrath to come, if we have not attended to their message, if we have despised the voice of God, if we have turned a deaf ear to their earnest exhortation, if we perish, we shall die warned—die under the sound of the Gospel, and our damnation must be an unpitied one, for our blood must fall upon our own heads. Permit me then, to try, if I can, to enlarge upon this thought, that the warning has been, in the case of many of you, all that could have been needed.

In the first place, the warnings of the ministry have been to most of you warnings that have been *heard*—"He heard the sound of the trumpet." In far off lands, the trumpet sound of warning is not heard. Alas! there are myriads of our fellow-creatures who have never been warned by God's embassadors, who know not that wrath abideth on them, and who do not yet understand the only way and method of salvation In your case it is very different. You have heard the Word of God preached to you. You cannot say, when you come before God, "Lord, I knew no better." There is not a man or a woman within this place who will dare then to plead ignorance. And moreover, you have not only heard with your ears, but some of you have been obliged to hear it in your consciences. I have before me many of my hearers whom I have had the pleasure of seeing now for some years. It has not been once, or twice, but many a time, I have seen the tear guttering their cheeks when I have spoken earnestly, faithfully, and affectionately to you. I have seen your whole soul moved within you; and yet, to my sorrow, you are now what you were: your goodness has been as the early cloud, and as the morning dew that passeth away. You have heard the Gospel. You wept under it, and you loved the sound of it, and you came again, and wept again, and many marveled that you did weep, but the greatest marvel was, that after having wept so well, you wiped away your tears so easily Oh, yes, God is my witness, there are some of you not an inch nearer heaven, but ye have sealed your own damnation doubly sure, unless ye repent: for ye have heard the Gospel, ye have despised prophesyings, ye have rejected the counsel of God against yourself; and, therefore, when you shall die, ye must die pitied by your friends, but at the same time with your blood on your own heads.

The trumpet was not only *heard*, but, more than that, *its warning was understood.* When the man, supposed in the text, heard the trumpet, he understood by it that the enemy was at hand, and yet he took not warning. Now, my brethren, in your case, the sound of the Gospel warning has been understood. A thousand faults your minister may have but

there is one fault from which he is entirely free, and that is, he is free from all attempts to use fine language in the expression of his thoughts; ye are all my witnesses, that if there be a Saxon word, or a homely phrase, a sentence that is rough and market like, that will tell you the truth, I always use that first. I can say solemnly, as in the sight of God, that I never went out of my pulpit, except with the firm belief, that whatever might have happened, I was perfectly understood. I had sought, at least, so to gather wise words, that no man might mistake my meaning; gnash his teeth he might, but he could not say, "The preacher was misty and cloudy, talking to me of metaphysics, beyond my comprehension; he has been obliged to say, "Well, I know what he meant, he spoke plainly enough to me." Well, sirs, then if it be so, and if ye have heard warnings that ye could understand, so much the more guilty are ye, if ye are living this day in rejection of them. If I have preached to you in a style above comprehension, then on my head must be your blood, because I ought to have made you understand; but if I come down to men of low estate, and pick even vulgar phrases to suit common people, then if you understood the warning, and if ye then risked it, mark you, my hands are clean of your blood. If ye be damned, I am innocent of your damnation, for I have told you plainly, that except ye repent, ye must perish, and that except ye put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is for you no hope of salvation.

Again, this trumpet sound was *startling*. The trumpet's sound is ever considered to be the most startling in the world. 'Tis that which shall be used on the resurrection morning to startle the myriads of sleepers, and make them rise from their tombs. Ay, and ye have had a startling ministry. Ye have sat, some of you, under ministers that might have made the devil himself tremble, so earnest have they been; and they have made you tremble sometimes, so much, that you could not sleep. The hair of your head was well nigh moved to stand upright. They spake as though they ne'er might speak again: as dying men to dying men. They spoke as if they had been in hell, and knew the vengeance

of the Almighty, and anon, they spoke as if they had entered into the heart of Jesus, and read his love to sinners. They had brows of brass; they knew not how to flinch. They laid your iniquity bare before your face, and with rough language that was unmistakeable, they made you feel that there was a man there who told you all things that ever you did. They so declared it, that you could not help feeling under it. You always retained a veneration for that minister, because you felt that he at least was honest with you; and you have sometimes thought that you would even go and hear him again, because there at least your soul was moved, and you were made to hear the truth. Yes, you have had a startling ministry, some of you. Then, sirs, if ye have heard the cry of fire, if ye are burned in your beds, your charred ashes shall not accuse me. If I have warned you that he that believeth not must be damned, if you are damned, your miserable souls shall not accuse me. If I have startled you sometimes from your slumbers, and made your balls and your pleasure parties uneasy, because I have sometimes warned you of these things, then sirs, if after all you put away these warnings, and you reject these counsels, you will be obliged to say, "My blood is on my own head."

In many of your cases the warning has been *very frequent*. If the man heard the trumpet sound once and did not regard it, possibly we might excuse him; but how many of my audience have heard the trumpet sound of the gospel very frequently. There you are, young man. You have had many years of a pious mother's teaching, many years of a pious minister's exhortations. Wagon loads of sermons have been exhausted upon you. You have had many sharp providences, many terrible sicknesses. Often when the death-bell has tolled for your friend, your conscience has been aroused. To you warnings are not unusual things; they are very common. Oh! my hearers, if a man should hear the gospel but once, his blood would be upon his own head for rejecting it; but of how much sorer punishment shall you be thought worthy who have heard it many and many a time. Ah! I may well weep, when I think how many sermons you have listened to,

many of you, how many times you have been cut to the heart A hundred times every year you have gone up to the house of God, and far oftener than that, and you have just added a hundred billets to the eternal pile. A hundred times the trumpet has sounded in your ears, and a hundred times you have turned away to sin again, to despise Christ, to neglect your eternal interests, and to pursue the pleasures and the concerns of this world. Oh! how mad is this, how mad Oh, sirs, if a man had but once poured out his heart before you concerning your eternal interests, and if he had spoken to you earnestly, and you had rejected his message, then, even then, ye had been guilty. But what shall we say to you upon whom the shafts of the Almighty have been exhausted? Oh, what shall be done unto this barren ground that hath been watered with shower after shower, and that hath been quickened with sunshine after sunshine? What shall be done unto him who being often rebuked, still hardeneth his neck? Shall he not be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy, and shall it not then be said, "His blood lieth at his own door, his guilt is on his own head?"

And I would just have you recollect one thing more. This warning that you have had so often has come to you *in time.* "Ah," said an infidel once, "God never regards man. If there be a God, he would never take notice of men." Said a Christian minister, who was sitting opposite to him in the carriage, "The day may come, sir, when you will learn the truth of what you have just said." "I do not understand your allusion, sir," said he. "Well, sir, the day may come, when you may call, and he will refuse; when you may stretch out your hands and he will not regard you, but as he has said in the book of Proverbs, so will he do, 'Because I called, and ye refused; because I stretched out my hands, and no man regarded, I also will mock at your calamity, I will laugh when your fear cometh.'" But oh, sirs, your warning has not come too late. You are not warned on a sick bed, at the eleventh hour, when there is but a bare possibility of salvation, but you are warned in time, you are warned to-day, you have been warned for these many years that are now past. If God should send a

preacher to the damned in hell, that were an unnecessary addition to their misery. Surely, if one could go and preach the gospel through the fields of Gehenna, and tell them of a Saviour they had despised, and of a gospel that is now beyond their reach, that were taunting poor souls with a vain attempt to increase their unutterable woe; but O my brethren, to preach the gospel now is to preach in a hopeful period; for "now is the accepted time: now is the day of salvation." Warn the boatman before he enters the current, and then, if he is swept down the rapids, he destroys himself. Warn the man before he drinks the cup of poison, tell him it is deadly: and then, if he drinks it, his death lies at his own door. And so, let us warn you before you depart this life; let us preach to you while as yet your bones are full of marrow, and the sinews of your joints are not loosed. We have then warned you in time, and so much the more shall your guilt be increased, because the warning was timely; it was frequent, it was earnest, it was appropriate, it was arousing, it was continually given to you, and yet you sought not to escape from the wrath to come.

And so even this morning would I say to you, if ye perish, my skirts are white of your blood; if ye are damned, it is not for want of calling after, nor for want of praying for, nor for want of weeping over. Your blood must be on your own heads; for the warning is all that is needed.

II. And now we come to the second point. MEN MAKE EXCUSES WHY THEY DO NOT ATTEND TO THE GOSPEL WARNING, BUT THESE EXCUSES ARE ALL FRIVOLOUS AND WICKED. I will just go over one or two of the excuses that people make. Some of them say, "Well, I did not attend to the warning because I did not believe there was any necessity for it." Ah! You were told that after death there was a judgment, and you did not believe there was any necessity that you should be prepared for that judgment. You were told that by the works of the law there shall no flesh living be justified, and that only through Christ can sinners be saved; and you did not think there was any necessity for Christ. Well, sir, you ought to have thought there was a necessity. You know there was a

necessity in your inner consciousness. You talked very large things when you stood up as an unbeliever, a professed unbeliever: but you know there was a still small voice that while you spake belied your tongue. You are well aware that in the silent watches of the night you have often trembled; in a storm at sea you have been on your knees to pray to a God whom on the land you have laughed at; and when you have been sick nigh unto death, you have said, "Lord, have mercy upon me;" and so you have prayed, that you have believed it after all. But if you did not believe it, you ought to have believed it. There was enough in reason to have taught you that there was an hereafter; the Book of God's revelation was plain enough to have taught it to you, and if you have rejected God's Book, and rejected the voice of reason and of conscience, your blood is on your own head. Your excuse is idle. It is worse than that, it is profane and wicked, and still on your own head be your everlasting torment.

"But," cries another, "I did not like the trumpet. I did not like the Gospel that was preached." Says one, "I did not like certain doctrines in the Bible. I thought the minister preached too harsh doctrines sometimes, I did not agree with the Gospel; I thought the Gospel ought to have been altered, and not to have been just what it was." You did not like the trumpet, did you? Well, but God made the trumpet, God made the Gospel; and inasmuch as ye did not like what God made, it is an idle excuse. What was that to you what the trumpet was, so long as it warned you? And surely, if it had been time of war, and you had heard a trumpet sounded to warn you of the coming of the enemy, you would not have sat still, and said, "now I believe that is a brass trumpet, I would like to have had it made of silver." No, but the sound would have been enough for you, and up you would have been to escape from the danger. And so it must be now with you. It is an idle pretence that you did not like it. You ought to have liked it, for God made the Gospel what it is.

But you say, "I did not like the man that blew it." Well, if you did not like one messenger of God, there are many in

this city. Could you not find one you did like? You did not like one man's manner; it was too theatrical; you did not like another's: it was too doctrinal; you did not like another's: it was too practical—there are plenty of them, you may take which you do like, but if God has sent the men, and told them how to blow, and if they blow to the best of their ability, it is all in vain for you to reject their warnings, because they do not blow the way you like. Ah, my brethren, we do not find fault with the way a man speaks, if we are in a house that is on fire. If the man calls, "Fire! Fire!" we are not particular what note he takes, we do not think what a harsh voice he has got. You would think any one a fool, who should lie in his bed, to be burned, because he said he did not like the way the man cried, "Fire." Why his business was to have been out of bed and down the stairs at once, as soon as he heard it.

But another says, "I did not like the man himself; I did not like the minister; I did not like the man that blew the trumpet; I could hear him preach very well, but I had a personal dislike to him, and so I did not take any notice of what the trumpet said." Verily, God will say to thee at last, "Thou fool, what hadst thou to do with that man; to his own master he stands or falls; thy business was with thyself." What would you think of a man? A man has fallen overboard from a ship, and when he is drowning, some sailor throws him a rope, and there it is. Well, he says, in the first place, "I do not like that rope; I don't think that rope was made at the best manufactory; there is some tar on it too, I do not like it; and in the next place, I do not like that sailor that threw the rope over, I am sure he is not a kind-hearted man, I do not like the look of him at all;" and then comes a gurgle and a groan, and down he is in the bottom of the sea; and when he was drowned, they said, that it served him right, if he would not lay hold of the rope, but would be making such foolish and absurd objections, when it was a matter of life and death. Then on his own head be his blood. And so shall it be with you at last. You are so busy with criticising the minister, and his style, and his doctrine, that your own

soul perishes. Remember you may get into hell by criticism, but you will never criticise your soul out of it. You may there make the most you can of it. You may be there and say, "I did not like the minister, I did not like his manner, I did not like his matter;" but all your dislikings will not get one drop of water to cool your burning tongue, nor serve to mitigate the unalleviated torments of that world of agony.

There are many other people who say, "Ah, well, I did none of those things, but I had a notion that the trumpet sound ought to be blown to everybody else, but not to me." Ah! that is a very common notion. "All men think all men mortal, but themselves," said a good poet; and all men think all men need the Gospel, but not themselves. Let each of us recollect that the Gospel has a message to each one of us. What saith the Gospel to *thee* my hearer? What saith the Word to *thee?* Forget thy neighbors, and ask this question. Doth it condemn *thee?* or doth it assure *thee* of *thy* pardon? for recollect, all thou hast to do in the hearing of the Word, is to hear with thine own ears for thine own soul, and it will be idle for any one to say "I did not think it applied to me," when we know that it is to be preached to every creature under heaven, and therefore there must be something in it for every creature or else it would not be preached to every creature.

Well, says another, "But I was so busy, I had so much to do, that I could not possibly attend to my soul's concerns. What will you say of the man who had so much to do that he could not get out of the burning house, but was burnt to ashes? What will you say of the man that had so much to do, that when he was dying, he had not time to send for a physician? Why, you will say, then he ought not to have so much to do. And if any man in the world has a business which causes him to lose his own soul for want of time, let him lay this question to his heart, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" But it is false—it is false—men have got time. It is the want of will, not want of way. You have time, sir, have you not, despite

all your business, to spend in pleasure? You have time to read your newspaper—have you no time to read your Bible? You have time to sing a song—have you no time to pray a prayer? Why, you know when farmer Brown met farmer Smith in the market one day, he said to him, "Farmer Smith, I can't think how it is you find time for hunting. Why, man, what with sowing and mowing and reaping and plowing, and all that, my time is so fully occupied on my farm, and I have no time for hunting." "Ah," said he, "Brown, if you liked hunting as much as I do, if you could not find time, you'd make it." And so it is with religion, the reason why men can not find time for it is, because they do not like it well enough. If they liked it, they would find time. And besides, what time does it want? What time does it require? Can I not pray to God over my ledger? Can I not snatch a text at my very breakfast, and think over it all day? May I not even when I am busy in the affairs of the world, be thinking of my soul, and casting myself upon a Redeemer's blood and atonement? It wants no time. There may be some time required some time for my private devotions, and for communion with Christ, but when I grow in grace, I shall think it right to have more and more time, the more I can possibly get, the happier I shall be, and I shall never make the excuse that I have no time.

"Well," says another, "but I thought I had time enough; you do not want me, sir, to be religious in my youth, do you? I am a lad, and may I not have a little frolic and sow my wild oats as well as anybody else?" Well—yes, yes; but at the same time the best place for pleasure that I know of, is where a Christian lives; the finest happiness in all the world is the happiness of a child of God. You may have your pleasures—oh, yes! you shall have them doubled and trebled, if you are a Christian. You shall not have things that worldlings call pleasures, but you shall have some that are a thousand times better. But only look at that sorrowful picture. There, far away in the dark gulf of woe, lies a young man, and he cries, "Ah! I meant to have repented when I was out of my apprenticeship, and I died before my time was up." "Ah!"

says another by his side, "and I thought, whilst I was a journeyman, that when I came to be a master, I would then think of the things of Christ, but I died before I had got money enough to start for myself." And then a merchant behind wails with bitter woe, and says, "Ah! I thought I would be religious when I had got enough to retire on, and live in the country; then I should have time to think of God, when I had got all my children married out, and my concerns settled about me, but here I am shut up in hell; and now what are all my delays worth, and what is all the time I gained for all the paltry pleasures in the world? Now I have lost my soul over them." We experience great vexation if we are unpunctual in many places; but we can not conceive what must be the horror and dismay of men who find themselves too late in the next world! Ah! friends, if I knew there was one here who said, "I shall repent next Wednesday," I would have him feel in a dreadful state till that Wednesday came; for what if he should die? Oh! what if he should die? Would his promise of a Wednesday's repentance save him from a Tuesday damnation?

Ah, these are all idle excuses. Men make not such when their bodily life is concerned. Would God that we were wise, that we would not make such pitiful pretences to apology, when our soul, our own soul, is the matter at stake. If they take not warning, whatever their excuse, their blood must be upon their own head.

III. And now, I come most solemnly to conclude with all the power of earnestness; the warning has been sufficient, the excuse for not attending to it has been proved profane then the last thought is "HIS BLOOD SHALL BE ON HIS OWN HEAD." Briefly thus—he shall perish; he shall perish *certainly;* he shall perish *inexcusably.* He shall *perish.* And what does that mean? There is no human mind, however capacious, that can ever guess the thought of a soul eternally cast away from God. The wrath to come is as inexpressible as the glory that shall be revealed hereafter. Our Saviour labored for words with which to express the horrors of a future state of the ungodly. You remember he talked of

worms that die not, and fires that are never quenched, of a pit without a bottom, of weeping, and wailing and gnashing of teeth in the outer darkness.

No preacher was ever so loving as Christ, but no man ever spoke so horribly about hell; and yet even when the Saviour had said his best and said his worst, he had not told us what are the horrors of a future state. Ye have seen sicknesses, ye have heard the shrieks of men and women when their pangs have been upon them. We, at least, have stood by the bed-sides even of some dear to us, and we have seen to what an extent agony may be carried in the human body, but none of us know how much the body is capable of suffering. Certainly the body will have to suffer forever—"He is able to cast both body and soul into hell." We have heard of exquisite torments, but we have never dreamt of any like unto this. Again, we have seen something of the miseries of the soul. Have we never marked the man that we used to know in our childhood who was depressed in spirits. All that ever could be done for him never could evoke a smile from him—never did the light of cheerfulness light up his eye —he was mournfully depressed. Ay, and it was my unhappy lot to live with one who was not only depressed in spirits, but whose mind had gone so far amiss, that it did brood fancies so mournful and dismal, that the very sight of him was enough to turn the sunlight of summer into the very darkness of a dreary winter. He had nothing to say but dark, groaning words. His thoughts always had a sombre appearance about them. It was midnight in his soul—a darkness that might be felt. Have you never seen yourselves what power the mind has over us to make us full of misery? Ah, brethren and sisters, if ye could go to many of our asylums, and to our sick wards—ay, and dying beds, too, you may know what acute anguish the mind may feel. And remember that the mind, as well as the mortal frame, is to endure damnation. Yes, we must not shirk that word, the Scripture saith it, and we must use it. Oh! men and women, except we repent, except we do each of us cry for mercy to him that is able to save, we must perish. All that is meant by that word "hell,"

must be realized in me, except I be a believer; and so all that is meant by "Depart, ye cursed," must be thine, unless thou dost turn unto God with full purpose of heart.

But again, he that turneth not at the rebuke of the minister shall die, and he shall die *certainly*. This is not a matter of perhaps or chance. The things we preach, and that are taught in Scripture, are matters of solemn certainty. It may be that death is that bourne from which no traveller returns, but it is not true that we know nothing of it. It is as certain as that there are men, and a world in which they live, that there is another world to come, and that if they die impenitent, that world will be to them one of misery. And mark you—there is no chance of escape, die without Christ, and there is no gate out of which you can escape—forever, oh, forever lost, and not one hope of mercy—cast away, and not one outlet for escape, not one solitary chance of ransom. Oh, if there were hope that in the world to come, men might escape, we need not be so earnest; but since once lost, lost for aye—once cast away, cast away without hope, without any prospect of a hope, we must be earnest. Oh, my God, when I remember that I have to-day some here present who in all probability must be dead before next Sabbath, I must be earnest. Out of so large an assembly, the chances are that we shall not all of us be found pilgrims in this world within another seven days. It is not only possible, but probable, that some one out of this vast audience will have been launched upon a world unknown. Shall it be myself, and shall I sail to the port of bliss, or must I sail over fiery waves forever, lost, shipwrecked, stranded, on the rocks of woe? Soul, which shall it be with thee? It may be thou shalt die, my grey-headed hearer, or thou young lad, thou boy, thou mayest die—I know not which, nor can we tell—God only knoweth. Then let each one ask himself—Am I prepared, should I be called to die? Yes, you may die where you are, on the benches where you are sitting—you may now die—and whither would you go? for recollect that whither ye go, ye go forever. Oh! eternity—eternity—eternity—must I climb thy topless steeps forever, and never reach the summit, and

must my path be ever misery or joy. Oh! eternity, thou depth without a bottom, thou sea without a shore, must I sail over thy boundless waves forever in one undeviating track—and must I either plough through seas of bliss, or else be driven by the stormy winds of vengeance, over gulfs of misery? "Then what am I?" "My soul awake and an impartial survey take." Am I prepared? Am I prepared. Am I prepared? For, prepared or not, death admits of no delay, and if he is at my door, he will take me where I must go forever, prepared or not.

Now, the last thing is, *the sinner will perish*—he will perish certainly, but, last of all, he will perish *without excuse*—his blood shall be on his own head. When a man is bankrupt, if he can say, "It is not through reckless trading—it has been entirely through the dishonesty of one I trusted that I am what I am;" he takes some consolation, and he says, "I can not help it." But oh, my hearers, if you make bankrupts of your own souls, after you have been warned, then your own eternal bankruptcy shall lie at your own door. Should never so great a misfortune come upon us, if we can trace it to the providence of God, we bear it cheerfully; but if we have inflicted it upon ourselves, then how fearful is it! And let every man remember that if he perish after having heard the Gospel, he will be his own murderer. Sinner, thou wilt drive the dagger into thine heart thyself. If thou despisest the Gospel, thou art preparing fuel for thine own bed of flames, thou art hammering out the chain for thine own everlasting binding; and when damned, thy mournful reflection will be this:—I have damned myself, I cast myself into this pit; for I rejected the Gospel; I despised the message; I trod under foot the Son of Man; I would have none of his rebukes; I despised his Sabbaths; I would not hearken to his exhortations, and now I perish by mine own hand, the miserable suicide of my own soul."

And now a sweet reflection strikes me. A good writer says, "There are, doubless, spots in the world that would be barren forever, if we recollected what had happened there." Says he, "I was once in St. Paul's cathedral, just under the dome, and

a friend just touched me gently and said, 'Do you see that little chisel mark? and I said 'Yes.' He said, 'That is where a man threw himself down, and there he fell, and was dashed to atoms.'" The writer says, "We all started aside from that little spot, where a fellow-creature's blood had been shed. It seemed an awful place when we remembered that." Now, there is many a street, there is many a way-side, there is many a house of God, where men have taken the last decision, and damned their own souls. I doubt not, there are some here this morning, standing or sitting, to whom the voice of conscience says, "Decide for God," and now Satan and the evil heart together are saying, "Reject the message; laugh it off; forget it: take a ticket for the theater to-morrow: do not let this man alarm us: it is his very profession to talk to us like this; let us go away, and laugh it off; and let us spend the rest of this day in merriment." Yes, that is the last warning thou wilt ever have. It is so with some of you. There are some of you that will this hour decide to damn yourselves, and you will look forever throughout eternity, to that place under the gallery, and you will say, "Alas! woe was the day I heard that man, I was half impressed—almost he persuaded me to be a Christian, but I decided for hell." And that will be a solemn spot to angels where you are standing, or where you are sitting, for angels will say to one another, "Stand aside; that is a spot where a man ruined his own soul for ever and ever." But the sweet thought is, that there are some places just the reverse.

Why, you are sitting, my friend, this morning, on a spot where some three weeks ago one sat who was converted to God; and that place where you are sitting you ought to venerate, for in that place there sat one who was one of the chiefest of sinners like yourself, and there the Gospel message met him. And far back there, behind the door, many a soul has been brought to Christ. Many a piece of good news have I heard from some in yonder upper gallery. "I could not see your face, sir, all the sermon through, but the arrow of the Lord found its way round the corner, and reached my heart notwithstanding that, and I was saved." Ah, well, may

God so bless this place, that every seat of it this day may be solemnized by his own grace, and a spot to be remembered in your future history by reason of the beginning of your blessedness, the dawn of your salvation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and be baptized, and thou shalt be saved." This is the gospel we are told to preach to every creature—"He that believeth, and is immersed, shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned."

# SERMON XVII.

## "WHAT HAVE I DONE?"

"What have I done?"—JEREMIAH viii. 6.

PERHAPS no figure represents God in a more gracious light than those figures of speech, which represent him as stooping from his throne, and as coming down from heaven to attend to the wants and to behold the woes of mankind. We must have love for that God, who, when Sodom and Gomorrah were reeking with iniquity, would not destroy those cities, although he knew their guilt and their wickedness, until he had made an actual visitation to them and had sojourned for awhile in their streets. Methinks we can not help pouring out our heart in affection to that God, of whom we are told that he inclines his ear from the highest glory, and puts it to the lip of the faintest that breathes out the true desire. How can we resist feeling that he is a God whom we must love, when we know that he regards everything that concerns us, numbers the very hairs of our heads, bids his angels protect our footsteps lest we dash our feet against stones, marks our path and ordereth our ways. But especially is this great truth brought near to man's heart, when we recollect how attentive God is, not merely to the temporal interests of his creatures, but to their spiritual concerns. God is represented in Scripture as waiting to be gracious, or, in the language of the parable, when his prodigals are yet a great way off he sees them; he runs and falls upon their neck and kisses them. He is so attentive to everything that is good, even in the poor sinner's heart, that to him there is music in a sigh, and beauty in a tear; and in this verse that I have just read, he represents himself as looking upon man's heart and listening—listening, if possibly he may hear something that is good. "I heark-

ened and heard; I listened; I stood still, and I attended to them." And how amiable does God appear, when he is represented as turning aside, and as it were with grief in his heart, exclaiming, "I *did* listen, I *did* hearken, but they spake not aright; no man repented of his wickedness, saying, "What shall I do?" Ah! my hearer, thou never hast a desire toward God which does not excite God's hope; thou dost never breathe a prayer toward heaven which he does not notice; and though thou hast very often uttered prayers which have been as the morning cloud and as the early dew that soon passeth away, yet all these things have moved Jehovah's bowels; for he has been hearkening to thy cry and noticing the breathing of thy soul, and though it all hath passed away, yet it did not pass away unnoticed, for he remembers it even now. And oh! thou that art this day seeking a Saviour, remember, that Saviour's eyes are on thy seeking soul to-day. Thou art not looking after one who can not see thee; thou art coming to thy Father, but thy Father sees thee even in the distance. It was but one tear that trickled down thy cheek, but thy Father noticed that as a hopeful sign; it was but one throb that went through thy heart just now during the singing of the hymn, but God, the Loving, noticed even that, and thought upon it as at least some omen that thou wast not yet quite hardened by sin, nor yet given up by love and mercy.

The text is "What have I done?" I shall just introduce that by a *few words of affectionate persuasion*, urging all now present to ask that question: secondly, I shall give them a *few words of assistance in trying to answer it;* and when I have so done, I shall finish by a *few sentences of solemn admonition to those who have had to answer the question against themselves.*

I. First, then, a few words of EARNEST PERSUASION, requesting every one now present, and more especially every unconverted person, to ask this question of himself, and answer it solemnly: "What have I done?"

Few men like to take the trouble to review their own lives, most men are so near bankruptcy that they are ashamed to

look at their own books. The great mass of mankind are like the silly ostrich, which, when hard pressed by the hunters, buries its head in the sand and shuts its eyes, and then thinks, because it does not see its pursuers, that therefore it is safe. The great mass of mankind, I repeat, are ashamed to review their own biographies; and if conscience and memory together could turn joint authors of a history of their lives throughout, they would buy a huge iron clasp and a padlock to it, and lock the volume up, for they dare not read it. They know it to be a book full of lamentation and woe, which they dare not read, and still go on in their iniquities. I have therefore a hard task in endeavoring to persuade you one and all to take down that book, and be its pages few or many, be they white or be they black, I have some difficulty in getting you to read them through. But may the Holy Spirit persuade you now, so that you may answer this question, "What have I done?" For remember, my dear friend, that searching yourself can do you no hurt. No tradesman ever gets the poorer by looking to his books; he may find himself to be poorer than he thought he was, but it is not the looking to the books that hath hurt him; he hath hurt himself by some ill trading before. Better, my friend, for you to know the past whilst there is yet time for repairing it, than that you should go blindfolded, hoping to enter the gates of Paradise and find out your mastake when alas! it is too late, because the door is shut. There is nothing to be lost by taking stock; you can not be any the worse for a little self examination. This of itself shall be one strong argument to induce you to do it; but remember you may be a great deal the better; for suppose your affairs are all right with God, why then you may make good cheer and comfort yourself, for he that is right with his God has no cause to be sad. But ah! remember there are many probabilities that you are wrong. There are so many in this world that are deceived, that there are many chances that you are deceived too. You may have a name to live and yet be dead; you may be like John Bunyan's tree, of which he said "'twas fair to look upon and green outside, but the inside of it was rotten enough to be tinder for the devil's tinder box." You

nay this day thus stand before yourself your fellow creatures well whitewashed, and exceeding fair, but you may be like that Pharisee of whom Christ said, "Thou art a whited sepulcher, for inwardly thou art full of rottenness and dead men's bones." Now, man, however thou mayest wish to be self-deceived, for my own part I feel that I would a thousand times rather know my own state really than have the most pleasing conceptions about it and find myself deceived. Many a time have I solemnly prayed that prayer, "Lord, help me to know the worst of my own case; if I be still an apostate from thee, without God and without Christ, at least let me be honest to myself and know what I am." Remember, my friend, that the time you have for self-examination is, after all, very short. Soon thou wilt know the great secret. I perhaps may not say words rough enough to rend off the mask which thou now hast upon thee, but there is one called Death who will stand no compliment. You may masquerade it out to-day in the dress of the saint, but death will soon strip you, and you must stand before the judgment seat after death has discovered you in all your nakedness, be that naked innocence or naked guilt. Remember, too, though you may deceive yourself, you will not deceive your God. You may have light weights, and the beam of the scale in which you weigh yourself may not be honest, and may not therefore tell the truth; but when God shall try you he will make no allowances; when the everlasting Jehovah grasps the balances of justice and puts his law into one scale, ah, sinner, how wilt thou tremble when he shall put thee into the other; for unless Christ be thy Christ thou wilt be found light weight—thou wilt be weighed in the balances and found wanting, and be cast away for ever.

O! what words shall I adopt to induce every one of you now to search yourselves! I know the various excuses that some of you will make. Some of you will plead that you are members of churches, and that, therefore, all is right with you. Perhaps you look across from the gallery, and you say to me, "Mr. Spurgeon, your hands baptized me but this year into the Lord Jesus, and you have often passed to me the sacramental bread and wine. Ah, my hearer, I know that, and I have

baptized, I fear, many of you that the Lord hath never baptized; and some of you have been received into the church fellowship on earth who were never received by God. If Jesus Christ had one hypocrite in his twelve, how many hypocrites must I have here in nearly twelve hundred? Ah! my hearers, in this age it is a very easy thing to make a profession of religion: many churches receive candidates into their fellowship without examination at all; I have had such come to me, and I have told them, "I must treat you just the same as if you came from the world," because they said, "I never saw the minister; I wrote a note to the Church, and they took me in." Verily, in this age of profession, a man may make the highest profession in the world, and yet be at last found with damned apostates. Do not put off the question for that; and do not say, "I am too busy to attend to my spiritual concerns; there is time enough yet." Many have said that, and before their "time enough" has come, they have found themselves where time shall be no more. O! thou that sayest thou hast time enough, how little dost thou know how near death is to thee. There are some present that will not see New Year's Day; there is every probability that a very large number will never see another year. O, may the Lord our God prepare us each for death and for judgment, and bless this morning's exhortation to our preparation, by leading us to ask the question—"What have I done?"

II. Now, then, I am to help you to answer the question—"What have I done?"

Christian, true Christian, I have little to say to thee this morning. I will not multiply words, but leave the inquiry with thine own conscience. What hast thou done? I hear thee reply, "I have done nothing to save myself; for that was done for me in the eternal covenant, from before the foundation of the world. I have done nothing to make a righteousness for myself, for Christ said, 'It is finished;' I have done nothing to procure heaven by my merits, for all that Jesus did for me before I was born." But, say, brother, what hast thou done for him who died to save thy wretched soul? What hast thou done for his church? What hast

thou done for the salvation of the world? What hast thou done to promote thine own spiritual growth in grace? Ah! I might hit some of you that are true Christians very hard here; but I will leave you with your God. God will chastise his own children. I will, however, put a pointed question. Are there not many Christians now present who can not recollect that they have been the means of the salvation of one oul during this year. Come, now; turn back. Have you any reason to believe that directly or indirectly you have been made the means this year of the salvation of a soul? I will go further. There are some of you who are old Christians, and I will ask you this question: Have you any reason to believe that ever since you were converted you have ever been the means of the salvation of a soul? It was reckoned in the East, in the time of the patriarchs, to be a disgrace to a woman that she had no children; but what disgrace it is to a Christian to have no spiritual children—to have none born unto God through his instrumentality! And yet, there are some of you here that have been spiritually barren, and have never brought one convert to Christ; you have not one star in your crown of glory, and must wear a starless crown in heaven. Oh! I think I see the joy and gladness with which a good child of God looked upon me last week, when we had heard some one who had been converted to God by her instrumentality. I took her by the hand and said, "Well, now, you have reason to thank God." "Yes, sir," she said, "I feel a happy and an honored woman now. I have never, that I know of, before been the means of bringing a soul to Christ." And the good woman looked so happy; the tears were in her eyes for gladness. How many have you brought during this year? Come, Christian, what have you done? Alas! alas! you have not been barren fig-trees, but still your fruit is such that it can not be seen. You may be alive unto God but how many of you have been very unprofitable and exceedingly unfruitful? And do not think that while I thus deal hardly with you I would escape myself. No, I ask myself the question, "What have I done?" And when I think of the zeal of Whitfield, and of the earnestness of many of those

great evangelists of former times, I stand here astounded at myself, and I ask myself the question, "What have I done?" And I can only answer it with some confusion of face. How often have I preached to you, my hearers, the Word of God, and yet how seldom have I wept over you as a pastor should? How often ought I to have warned you of the wrath to come, when I have forgotten to be so earnest as I might have been. I fear lest the blood of souls should lie at my door, when I come to be judged of my God at last. I beseech you, pray for your minister in this thing, that he may be forgiven, if there has ever been a lack of earnestness, and energy, and prayerfulness, and pray that during the next year I may always preach as though I ne'er might preach again.

"A dying man to dying men."

I heard the moralist whilst I was questioning the Christian, say, "What have I done? Sir, I have done all I ought to have done. You may, as a Gospeller, stand there and talk to me about sins; but I tell you, Sir, I have done all that was my duty; I have always attended my church or chapel regularly every Sunday as ever a man or woman could; I have always read prayers in the family, and I always say prayers before I go to bed and when I get up in the morning. I don't know that I owe anybody anything, or that I have been unkind to anybody; I give a fair share to the poor, and I think if good works have any merit I certainly have done a great deal." Quite right, my friend, very right, indeed, *if* good works have any merit; but then it is very unfortunate that they have not any; for our good works, if we do them to save ourselves by them, are no better than our sins. You might as well hope to go to heaven by cursing and swearing, as by the merits of your own good works; for although good works are infinitely preferable to cursing and swearing in a moral point of view, yet there is no more merit in one than there is in the other, though there is less sin in one than in the other. Will you please to remember, then, that all you have been doing all these years is good for nothing? "Well, but, sir, I

have trusted in Christ." Now, stop! Let me ask you a question. Do you mean to say, that you have trusted partly in Christ, and partly in your own good works? "Yes, sir." Well, then, let me tell you, the Lord Jesus Christ will never be a make-weight; you must take Christ wholly, or else no Christ at all, for Christ will never go shares with you in the work of salvation. So, I repeat, all you have ever done is good for nothing. You have been building a card-house, and the tempest will blow it down; you have been building a house upon the sand, and when the rains descend and the floods come, the last vestige of it will be swept away forever. Hear ye the word of the Lord! "By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things that are written in the book of the law to do them;" and in as much as you have not continued in all things that are written in the law you are transgressors of the law, and you are under the curse, and all that the law has to say to you is, "Cursed, cursed, cursed! Your morality is of no help to you whatever, as to eternal things."

I turn to another character. He says, "Well, I don't trust in my morality nor in anything else; I say,

'Begone dull care, I pray thee begone from me.'

I have nothing to do with talking about eternity, as you would have me. But, sir, I am not a bad fellow after all. It is a very little that I ever do amiss; now and then a peccadillo, just a little folly, but neither my country, nor my friends, nor my own conscience, can say anything against me. True, I am none of your saints; I don't profess to be too strict; I may go a little too far sometimes, but it is only a little; and I dare say we shall be able to set all matters straight before the end comes." Well, friend, but I wish you had asked yourself the question, "What have I done?"——it strikes me that if each of you would just take off that film, that films your heart and your life over, you might see a grievous leprosy lurking behind what you have done. "Well, for the matter of that," says one, "perhaps I may have taken a glass or two too much

sometimes." Stop a bit! What is the name of that? Stutter as much as you like! Out with it! What is the name of it? "Why, it is just a little mirth, sir." Stop, let us have the right name of it. What do you call it in any one else? "Drunkenness, I suppose." Says another, "I have been a little loose in my talk sometimes." What is that? "It has been just a merry spree." Yes, but please to call it what it ought to be called—lascivious conversation. Write that down. 'Oh! no, sir; things are looking serious." Yes, they are indeed; but they do not look any more serious than they really are. Sometimes you have been out on the Sabbath day haven't you? "Oh! yes; but that has been only now and then—just sometimes." Yes, but let us put it down what it is, and we will see what the list comes to. Sabbath-breaking! "Stop," you say, "I have gone no further, sir; certainly I have gone no further." I suppose in your conversation, sometimes during your life, you have quoted texts of Scripture to make jokes of them, haven't you? And sometimes you have cried out, when you have been a little surprised, "Lord, have mercy upon me!" and such things. I don't venture to say you swear; though there is a Christian way of swearing that some people get into, and they think it is not quite swearing, but what it is besides nobody knows, and so we will put it down as swearing—cursing and swearing. "Oh! sir, it was only when somebody trod on my toes, or I was angry." Never mind, put it down by its right name: we shall get a pretty good list against you by and by. I suppose that in trade you never adulterate your articles. "Well that is a matter of business in which you ought not to interfere." Well, it so happens I am going to interfere—and if you please we will call it by its right name—stealing. We will put that down. I suppose you have never been hard with a debtor, have you? You have never at any time wished that you were richer, and sometimes half wished that your opposite neighbor would lose part of his custom, so that you might have it? Well, we will call it by its right name: that is "covetousness, which is idolatry." Now, the list seems to be getting black indeed. Besides that, how have you spent all this year; and

though you have pretended sometimes to say prayers, have you ever really prayed? No, you have not. Well, then there is prayerlessness to put down. You have sometimes read the Bible, you have sometimes listened to the ministry but have you not, after all, let all these things pass away? Then I want to know whether that is not despising God, and whether we must not put that down under that name. Truly we need go but very little further; for the list already when summed up is most fearful, and few of us can escape from sins so great as these, if our conscience be but a little awake.

But there is one man here who has grown very careless and indifferent to every point of morality, and he says, "Ah! young man, I could tell you what I have done during the year." Stop, sir, I don't particularly wish to know just now; you may as well tell it to yourself when you get home. There are young people here: it would not do them much good to know what you have done perhaps. You are no better than you should be, some people say; which means, you are so bad they would not like to say what you are. Do you suppose in all this congregation we have no debauched men—none that indulge in the vilest sin and lust? Why, God's angel seems even now to be flying through our midst, and touching the conscience of some, to let them know in what iniquities they have indulged during the year. I pray God that my just simply alluding to them may be the means of startling your conscience. Ah! ye may hide your sins; the coverlet of darkness may be your shelter; you may think they shall never be discovered; but remember, every sin that you have done shall be read before the sun, and men and angels shall hear it in the day of final account. Ah! my hearer, be thou moral or be thou dissolute, I beseech thee, answer this question solemnly to-day: "What have I done?" It would be as well if you took a piece of paper when you went home, and just wrote down what you have done from last January to December; and if some of you do not get frightened at it I must say you have got pretty strong nerves, and are not likely to be frightened at much yet.

Now I specially address myself to the unconverted man

and I would help him to answer this question in another point of view. "What have I done?" Ah! man, thou that livest in sin, thou that art a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God, what hast thou done? Dost thou not know that one sin is enough to damn a soul for ever? Hast thou never read in Holy Scripture that cursed is he that sins but once? How damned then, art thou by the myriad sins of this one year! Recall, I beseech thee, the sins of thy youth and thy former transgressions up till now; and if one sin would ruin thee for ever, how ruined art thou now! Why, man, one wave of sin may swamp thee. What will these oceans of thy guilt do? One witness against thee will be enough to condemn thee: behold the crowds of follies and of crimes now gathered round the judgment-seat that have gone before thee into judgment. How wilt thou escape from their testimonies, when God shall call thee to his bar. What hast thou done? Come, man, answer this question. There are many consequences involved in thy sin, and in order to answer this question rightly thou must reply to every consequence, what hast thou done to thine own soul? Why, thou hast destroyed it; thou hast done thy best to ruin it for ever. For thine own poor soul thou hast been digging dungeons; thou hast been piling fagots; thou hast been forging chains of iron —fagots with which to burn it, and fetters with which to bind it for ever.

Remember, thy sins are like sowing for a harvest. What a harvest is that which thou hast sown for thy poor soul! Thou hast sown the wind, thou shalt reap the whirlwind; thou hast sown iniquity, thou shalt reap damnation. But what hast thou done against the gospel? Remember, how many times this year thou hast heard it preached? Why, since thy birth there have been wagon-loads of sermons wasted on thee. Thy parents prayed for thee in thy youth; thy friends instructed thee till thou didst come to manhood. Since then how many a tear has been wept by the minister for thee! How many an earnest appeal has been shot into thine heart! But thou hast rent out the arrow. Ministers have been concerned to save thee, and thou hast never been concerned about

thyself. What hast thou done against Christ? Remember, Christ has been a good Christ to sinners here; but as there is nothing that burns so well as that soft substance, oil, so there is nothing that will be so furious as that gentle-hearted Saviour, when he comes to be your Judge. Fiercer than a lion on his prey is rejected love. Despise Christ on the cross, and it will be a terrible thing to be judged by Christ on his throne.

But again: what have you done for your children this year? Oh! there be some here present that have been doing all they could to ruin their children's souls. 'Tis solemn what responsibility rests upon a father; and what shall be said of a drunken father?—the father that sets his children an example of drunkenness. Swearer, what have you done for your family? Haven't you, too, been twisting the rope for their eternal destruction? Will they not be sure to do as you do? Mother, you have several children, but this year you have never prayed for one of them, never put your arms round their necks as they kneeled at their little chair at night, and said, "Our Father;" you have never told them of Jesus that loved children, and once became a child like them. Ah, then, you too have neglected your children. I remember a mother who was converted to God in her old age, and she said to me—and I shall never forget the woman's grief—"God has forgiven me, but I shall never forgive myself. For sir," she said, "I have nourished and brought up children but I have done it without any respect to religion." And then she burst into tears, and said, "I have been a cruel mother, sir; I have been a wretch!" "Why," said I, "my good woman, you have brought your children up." "Yes," said she, "my husband died when they were young, and left me with six of them, and these hands have earned their bread and found them clothes; no one," she said, "can accuse me of being unkind to them in anything but this; but this is the worst of all; I have been a cruel mother to them, for while I fed their bodies I neglected their souls." But some have gone further than this. Ah, young man, you have not only done your best this year to damn yourself, but you have done

your best to damn others! Remember, last January, when you took that young man into the tavern for the first time, and laughed at all his boyish scruples, as you called them, and told him to drink away, as you did. Remember, when in the darkness of night you first led astray one young man whose principles were virtuous, and who had not known lust unless you had revealed it to him; you said at the time, "Come with me; I'll show you London life, I'll let you see pleasure!" That young man, when he first came to your shop, used to go to the house of God on Sunday, and seemed to bid fair for heaven—"Ah," you say, "I have laughed religion out of Jackson, he doesn't go any where on a Sunday now except for a spree, and he is just as merry as any of us." Ah! sir, and you will have two hells when you are damned; you will have your own hell and his too, for he will look through the lurid flames upon you, and say, "Mayhap, I had never been here if you had not brought me here!" And ah! seducer, what eyes will be those that will glare at you through hell's horror?—The eyes of one whom you led into iniquity! what double hells they will be to you as they glare on you like two stars, whose light is fury, and wither your blood for ever! Pause, ye that have led others astray, and tremble now. I paused myself, and prayed to God when I first knew a Saviour, that he would help me to lead those to Christ that I had ever in any way led astray. And I remember George Whitfield says when he began to pray, his first prayer was that God would convert those with whom he used to play at cards and waste his Sundays. "And blessed be God," he says, "I got every one of them."

O my God, can I not detect in some face here astonishment and terror. Doth no man's knees knock together? Doth no man's heart quail within him because of his iniquity? Surely it cannot be so, else were your hearts turned to steel, and your bowels become as iron in the midst of you. Surely, if it be so, the words of God are most certainly true, wherein he saith, in the seventh verse of this chapter—"The stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming;

but my people know not the judgment of the Lord;" and certainly that prophet was true who said, "The ox knoweth its owner, and the ass his master's crib; but my people doth not know, Israel doth not consider." Oh, are ye so brutish as to let the reflections of that guilt pass over you without causing astonishment and terror? Then, surely we who feel our guilt have need to bend our knees for you, and pray that God might yet bring you to know yourselves; for, living and dying as you are, hardened and without hope, your lot must be horrible in the extreme.

How happy should I be if I might hope that the great mass of you could accompany me in this humble confession of our faith; may I speak as if I were speaking for each one of you? It shall be at your option, either to accept what I say, or to reject it; but, I trust, the great multitude of you will follow me. "Oh, Lord! I this morning confess that my sins are greater than I can bear; I have deserved thy hottest wrath, and thine infinite displeasure; and I hardly dare to hope that thou canst have mercy upon me; but inasmuch as thou didst give thy Son to die upon the cross for sinners, thou hast also said, 'Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth,' Lord, I look to thee this morning, though I never looked before, yet I look now; though I have been a slave of sin to this moment, yet Lord, accept me, sinner though I be, through the blood and righteousness of thy Son, Jesus Christ. Oh Father, frown not on me; thou mayest well do so, but I plead that promise which says, 'Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. Lord, I come—

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

My faith doth lay its hand,
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin.

'Lord accept me, Lord pardon me, and take me as I am, from

this time forth and for ever, to be thy servant whilst I live, to be thy redeemed when I die." Can you say that? Did not many a heart say it? Did I not hear many a lip in silence utter it? Be of good cheer, my brother, my sister, that if that came from your heart, you are as safe as the angels of heaven, for you are a child of God, and you shall never perish.

III. Now I have to address a few words of AFFECTIONATE ADMONITION, and then I have done. It is a very solemn thing to think how years roll away. I never spent a shorter year in my life than this one, and the older I grow, the shorter the years get; and you, old men, I dare say, look back on your sixty and seventy years, and you say, "Ah, young man, they will seem shorter, soon!" No doubt, they will. "So teach us to number our days, O God, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." But, is it not a solemn thing, that there is another year nearly gone; and yet many of you are unsaved? You are just where you were last year. No, you are not, you are nearer death, and you are nearer hell, except you repent; and, perhaps, even what I have said this morning will have no effect upon you. You are not altogether hardened, for you have had many serious impressions. Scores of times you have wept under discourses, and yet all has been in vain, for you are what you were. I beseech you, answer this question, "What have I done?" for, remember, there will be a time when you will ask this question, but it will be too late. When is that—say you—on the death bed? No, it is not too late there.

> "While the lamp holds out to burn,
> The vilest sinner may return."

But it will be too late to ask, "What have I done?" when the breath has gone out of your body. Just suppose the monument as it used to be, before they caged it round. Suppose a man going up the winding staircase to the top, with a full determination to destroy himself. He has got on the outside of the railings. Can you imagine him for a

moment saying, "What have I done?" just after he has taken his leap. Why, methinks some spirit in the air might whisper, "Done? you have done what you can never undo. You are lost—lost—lost!" Now, remember that you that have not Christ, are to-day going up that spiral stair-case; perhaps, to-morrow you will be standing in the article of death upon the palisading, and when death has gotten you, and you are just leaping from that monument of life down to the gulf of despair, that question will be full of horror to you. "What have you done?" But the answer for it will not be profitable, but full of terror. Methinks, I see a spirit launched upon the sea of eternity. I hear it say, "What have I done?" It is plunged in flaming waves, and cries, "What have I done?" It sees before it a long eternity; but it asks the question again, "What have I done?" The dread answer comes; thou hast earned all this for thyself. Thou knewest thy duty, but thou didst it not; Thou wast warned, but thou didst despise the warning." Ah! hear the doleful soliloquy of such a spirit. The last great day is come; the flaming throne is set, and the great book is opened. I hear the leaves as with terrible rustle they are turned over. I see men motioned to the right or to the left, according to the result of that great book. And what have I done? I know that to me sin will be destruction, for I have never sought a Saviour. What is that? The Judge has fixed his eye on me. Now, it is on me turned. Will he say, "Depart ye cursed," unto me? Oh! let me be crushed for ever, rather than bear that sight. There is no noise, but the finger is lifted, and I am dragged out of the crowd, and singly I stand before the Judge. He turns to my page, and before he reads it, my heart quakes within me. "Be it so," says he, "it has never been blotted with my blood. You despised my calls; you laughed at my people; you would have none of my mercy; you said that you would take the wages of unrighteousness. You shall have them, the wages of sin is death." Ah! me, and is he about to say, "Depart, ye cursed?" Yes, with a voice louder than a thousand thunders, he says, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Ah!

it is all true now. I laughed at the minister, because he preached about hell; and here am I in hell, myself. Ah! I used to wonder why he wanted to frighten us so. Ah! I would to God he had frightened me more, if he might but have frightened me out of this place. But now, here am I lost, and there is no escape. I am in darkness so dark, there is not a ray of light can ever reach me. I am shut up so close, that not one of the bolts and bars can ever be removed. I am damned for ever. Ah! that is a dreary soliloquy. I cannot tell it to you. Oh! if you were there, yourselves, if you could only know what they feel, and see what they endure, then would you wonder that I am not more earnest in preaching the Gospel, and you would marvel, not that I wish to make you weep, but that I did not weep far more myself, and preach more solemnly. Ah! my hearers, as the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, I shall one day stand acknowledged by our conscience as having been a true witness unto you this morning; for there is not one of you here today, but will be without excuse, if you perish. You have been warned, I have warned you as earnestly as I can. I have no more powers to spend, no more arts to try, no more persuasion that I can use. I can only conclude by saying, I beseech you, fly to Jesus. I entreat you, as immortal spirits that are bound for endless weal or woe, fly ye to Christ; seek for mercy at his hands; trust in him, and be saved; and, at your peril, reject my solemn warning. Remember, ye may reject it, but ye reject not me, but him that sent me. Ye may despise it, but ye despise not me, but a greater than Moses, even Jesus Christ the Lord; and when ye come before his bar, piercing will be his language, and terrible his words, when he condemns you for ever, for ever, for ever, without hope, for ever, for ever, for ever. May God deliver us from that, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

# SERMON XVII.

## LIGHT AT EVENING TIME.

"It shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light."—ZECHARIAH xiv. 7.

I SHALL not stay to notice the particular occasion upon which these words were uttered, or to discover the time to which they more especially refer; I shall rather take the sentence as a rule of the kingdom, as one of the great laws of God's dispensation of grace, "that at evening time it shall be light." Whenever philosophers wish to establish a general law, they think it necessary to collect a considerable number of individual instances; these being put together, they then infer from them a general rule. Happily, this need not be done with regard to God. We have no need, when we look abroad in providence, to collect a great number of incidents, and then from them infer the truth; for since God is immutable, one act of his grace is enough to teach us the rule of his conduct. Now, I find in this one place it is recorded that on a certain occasion, during a certain adverse condition of a nation, God promised that "at evening time it should be light." If I found that in any human writing, I should suppose that the thing might have occurred once, that a blessing was conferred in emergency on a certain occasion, but I could not from it deduce a rule; but when I find this written in the book of God, that on a certain occasion when it was evening time with his people God was pleased to give them light, I feel myself more than justified in deducing from it the rule, that always to his people at evening time there shall be light.

This, then, shall be the subject of my present discourse. There are different evening times that happen to the church

and to God's people, and as a rule we may rest quite certain that at evening time there shall be light.

God very frequently acts in grace in such a manner that we can find a parallel in nature. For instance, God says, "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, even so shall my word be, it shall not return unto me void, it shall accomplish that which I please, it shall prosper in the thing whereto I have sent it." We find him speaking concerning the coming of Christ, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth." We find him liking the covenant of grace to the covenant which he made with Noah concerning the seasons, and with man concerning the different revolutions of the year —"Seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." We find that the works of creation are very frequently the mirror of the works of grace, and that we can draw figures from the world of Nature to illustrate the great acts of God in the world of his grace toward his people. But sometimes God oversteps nature. In nature after evening time there cometh night. The sun hath had its hours of journeying; the fiery steeds are weary; they must rest. Lo, they descend the azure steeps and plunge their burning fetlocks in the western sea, while night in her ebon chariot follows at their heels. God, however, oversteps the rule of nature. He is pleased to send to his people times when the eye of reason expects to see no more day, but fears that the glorious landscape of God's mercies will be shrouded in the darkness of his forgetfulness. But instead thereof God overleapeth nature, and declares that at evening time instead of darkness there shall be light.

It is now my business to illustrate this general rule by different particulars. I shall dwell most largely upon the last, that being the principal object of my sermon this morning.

I. To begin, then, "At evening time it shall be light." The first illustration we take from *the history of the church at large*. The church at large has had many evening-times. If I might derive a figure to describe her history from anything

in this lower world, I should describe her as being like a sea. At times the abundance of grace has been gloriously manifest. Wave upon wave has triumphantly rolled in upon the land, covering the mire of sin, and claiming the earth for the Lord of Hosts. So rapid has been its progress that its course could scarce be obstructed by the rocks of sin and vice. Complete conquest seemed to be foretold by the continual spread of the truth. The happy church thought that the day of her ultimate triumph had certainly arrived, so potent was her word by her ministers, so glorious was the Lord in the midst of her armies, that nothing could stand against her. She was "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Heresies and schisms were swept away, false gods and idols lost their thrones; Jehovah Omnipotent was in the midst of his church, and he upon the white horse rode forth conquering and to conquer. Before long, however, if you read history, you find it always has happened that there came an ebb-tide. Again the stream of grace seemed to recede, the poor church was driven back either by persecution or by internal decay; instead of gaining upon man's corruptions it seemed as if man's corruptions gained on her; and where once there had been righteousness like the waves of the sea, there was the black mud and mire of the filthiness of mankind. Mournful tunes the church had to sing, when by the rivers of Babylon she sat down and wept, remembering her former glories, and weeping her present desolation. So has it always been—progressing, retrograding, standing still awhile, and then progressing once more, and falling back again. The whole history of the church has been a history of onward marches, and then of quick retreats—a history which I believe is, on the whole, a history of advance and growth, but which read chapter by chapter, is a mixture of success and repulse, conquest and discouragement. And so I think it will be even to the last. We shall have our sunrises, our meridian noon, and then the sinking in the west; we shall have our sweet dawnings of better days, our Reformations, our Luthers and our Calvins; we shall have our bright full noon-tide, when the gospel is fully preached, and the power of God is

known; we shall have our sunset of ecclesiastical weakness and decay. But just as sure as the evening-tide seems to be drawing over the church, "at evening time it shall be light." Mark well that truth all through the sacred history of the church. In the day when every lamp of prophesy seemed to have ceased, when he who once thundered in the streets of Rome was burned at the stake and strangled; when Savanarola had departed, and his followers had been put to confusion, and the black clouds of Popery seemed to have quenched the sunlight of God's love and grace upon the world; in those dark dim ages when the gospel seemed to have died out, no doubt Satan whispered in himself, "The church's sunset is now come." It is evening time with her. Only a few rays are struggling from the sun of righteousness to cheer the darkness. Satan thought mayhap the world should lie for ever beneath the darkness of his dragon wing. But lo! at evening time it was light. God brought forth the solitary monk that shook the world; he raised up men to be his coadjutors and helpers; the sun rose in Germany; it shone in every land, nor have we ever had an even-tide so near to darkness since that auspicious time. Yet there have been other seasons of dark foreboding. There was a time when the church of England was sound asleep, when the various bodies of Dissenters were quite as bad, when religion degenerated into a dead formality, when no life and no power could be found in any pulpit throughout the land, but when an earnest man was so rare that he was almost a miracle. Good men stood over the ruins of our Zion, and said, "Alas, alas, for the slain of the daughter of my people! Where, where are the days of the mighty puritans who with the banner of the truth in their hand crushed a lie beneath their feet? O truth! thou hast departed; thou hast died." "No," says God, "it is evening time; and now it shall be light." There were six young men at Oxford who met together to pray those six young men were expelled for being too godly; they went abroad throughout our land, and the little leaven leavened the whole lump. Whitfield, Wesley, and their immediate successors flashed o'er the land like lightning in a dark

night, making all men wonder whence they came and who they were; and working so great a work, that both in and out of the Establishment, the gospel came to be preached with power and vigor. At evening time God has always been pleased to send light to his church.

We may expect to see darker evening times than have ever been beheld. Let us not imagine that our civilization shal be more enduring than any other that has gone before it, unless the Lord shall preserve it. It may be that the suggestion will be realized which has so often been laughed at as folly, that one day men should sit upon the broken arches of London Bridge, and marvel at the civilization that has departed, just as men walk over the mounds of Nimroud, and marvel at cities buried there. It is just possible that all the civilization of this country may die out in blackest night; it may be that God will repeat again the great story which has been so often told—"I looked, and lo, in the vision I saw a great and terrible beast, and it ruled the nations, but lo, it passed away and was not." But if ever such things should be—if the world ever should have to return to barbarism and darkness—if instead of what we sometimes hope for, a constant progress to the brightest day, all our hopes should be blasted, let us rest quite satisfied that "at evening time there shall be light," that the ends of the world's history shall be an end of glory. However red with blood, however black with sin the world may yet be, she shall one day be as pure and perfect as when she was created. The day shall come when this poor planet shall find herself unrobed of those swaddling bands of darkness that have kept her luster from breaking forth. God shall yet cause his name to be known from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof,

"And the shouts of jubilee,
Loud as mighty thunders roar,
Or the fullness of the sea,
When it breaks upon the shore,
Shall yet be heard the wide world o'er."

II. This rule holds equally good *in the little*, as well as *in the great*. We know that in nature the very same law that rules the atom, governs also the starry orbs.

> "The very law that molds a tear,
> And bids it trickle from its source,
> That law preserves the earth a sphere,
> And guides the planets in their course."

It is even so with the laws of grace. "At evening time it shall be light" to the church; "at evening time it shall be light" *to every individual.* Christian let us descend to lowly things. Thou hast had thy bright days *in temporal matters:* thou hast sometimes been greatly blessed: thou canst remember the day when the calf was in the stall, when the olive yielded its fruit, and the fig-tree did not deny its harvest; thou canst recollect the years when the barn was almost bursting with the corn, and when the vat overflowed with the oil; thou rememberest when the stream of thy life was deep, and thy ship floated softly on, without one disturbing billow of trouble to molest it. Thou saidst in those days, "I shall see no sorrow; God hath hedged me about; he hath preserved me; he hath kept me; I am the darling of his providence; I know that all things work together for my good, for I can see it is plainly so." Well, Christian, thou hast after that had a sunset; the sun which shone so brightly, began to cast his rays in a more oblique manner every moment, until at last the shadows were long, for the sun was setting, and the clouds began to gather; and though the light of God's countenance tinged those clouds with glory, yet it was waxing dark. Then troubles lowered o'er thee; thy family sickened, thy wife was dead, thy crops were meager, and thy daily income was diminished, thy cupboard was no more full, thou wast wondering for thy daily bread; thou didst not know what should become of thee, mayhap thou wast brought very low; the keel of thy vessel did grate upon the rocks; there was not enough of bounty to float thy ship above the rocks of poverty. "I sink in deep mire," thou saidst, "where there is no standing; all thy waves and thy billows have gone over

me." What to do you could not tell; strive as you might, your strivings did but make you worse. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." You used both industry and economy, and you added thereunto perseverance; but all in vain. It was in vain that you rose up early, and sat up late, and ate the bread of carefulness; nothing could you do to deliver yourself, for all attempts failed. You were ready to die in despair. You thought the night of your life had gathered with eternal blackness. You would not live always, but had rather depart from this vale of tears. Christian! bear witness to the truth of the maxim of the text! Was it not light with thee at evening time? The time of thine extremity was just the moment of God's opportunity. When the tide had run out to its very furthest, then it began to turn; thine ebb had its flow; thy winter had its summer; thy sunset had its sunrise; "at evening time it was light." On a sudden by some strange work of God, as thou didst think it then, thou wast completely delivered. He brought out thy righteousness like the light, and thy glory as the noon-day. The Lord appeared for thee in the days of old: he stretched out his hand from above; he drew thee out of deep waters; he set thee upon a rock and established thy goings. Mark, thou then, O heir of heaven! what hath been true to thee in the years that are past, shall be true to thee even till the last. Art thou this day exercised with woe, and care, and misery? Be of good cheer! In thine "evening time it shall be light." If God chooseth to prolong thy sorrow, he shall multiply thy patience; but the rather, it may be, he will bring thee into the deeps, and thence will he lead thee up again. Remember thy Saviour descended that he might ascend: so must thou also stoop to conquer; and if God bids thee stoop, should it be to the very lowest hell, remember, if he bade thee stoop, he will bring thee up again. Remember what Jonah said—"Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest me." Oh! exclaim with him of old, who trusted his God when he had nothing else to trust: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields

shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Do thou so, and be blessed; for "at evening time it shall be light."

III. But now we seek a third illustration from *the spiritual sorrows of God's own people.* God's children have two kinds of trials, trials temporal and trials spiritual. I shall be brief on this point, and shall borrow an illustration from good John Bunyan. You remember John Bunyan's description of Apollyon meeting Christian. Bunyan tells it figuratively, but it is no figure: he that hath ever met Apollyon will tell you that there is no mistake about the matter, but that there is a dread reality in it. Our Christian met Apollyon when he was in the valley of humiliation, and the dragon did most fiercely beset him; with fiery darts he sought to destroy him, and take away his life. The brave Christian stood to him with all his might, and used his sword and shield right manfully, till his shield became studded with a forest of darts, and his hand did cleave unto his sword. You remember how for many an hour that man and that dragon fought together, till at last the dragon gave Christian a horrible fall, and down he went upon the ground; and woe worth the day! at the moment when he fell he dropped his sword! You have but to picture the scene: the dragon drawing up all his might, planting his foot upon Christian's neck, and about to hurl the fiery dart into his heart. "Aha! I have thee now," saith he, "thou art in my power."

Strange to say, "at evening time it was light." At the very moment when the dragon's foot was enough to crush the very life out of poor Christian, it is said, he did stretch out his hand; he grasped his sword, and giving a desperate thrust at the dragon, he cried, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy; for when I fall I shall arise again;" and so desperately did he cut the dragon that he spread his wings and flew away and Christian went on his journey rejoicing in his victory. Now, the Christian understands all that! it is no dream to him. He has been under the dragon's foot many a time. Ah! and all the world put on a man's heart at once is not equal in

weight to one foot of the devil. When Satan once gets the upper hand of the spirit, he neither wants strength, nor will, nor malice, to torment it. Hard is that man's lot, that has fallen beneath the hoof of the evil one in his fight with him. But blessed be God, the child of God is ever safe, as safe beneath the dragon's foot as he shall be before the throne of God in heaven. "At evening time it shall be light." And let all the powers of earth and hell, and all the doubts and fears that the Christian ever knew, conspire together to molest a saint, in that darkest moment, lo, God shall arise and his enemies shall be scattered, and he shall get unto himself the victory. O for faith to believe that. O! for confidence in God never to doubt him, but in the darkest moment of our sorrows, still to feel all is well with us! "At evening time it shall be light."

IV. Bear with me whilst I just hint at one more particular, and then I will come to that upon which I intend to dwell mainly at the last. To *the sinner when coming to Christ* this is also a truth. "At evening time it shall be light." Very often when I am sitting to see inquirers, persons have come to me to tell me the story of their spiritual history; and they tell me their little tale with an air of the greatest possible wonder, and ask me as soon as they have told it whether it is not extremely strange. "Do you know, sir, I used to be so happy in the things of the world, but conviction entered into my heart, and I began to seek the Saviour; and do you know that for a long time, sir, when I was seeking the Saviour I was so miserable that I could not bear myself? Surely sir, this is a strange thing." And when I have looked them in the face, and said, "No, it is not strange; do you know I have had a dozen to-night, and they have all told me the same; that is the way all God's people go to heaven," they have stared at me, as if they did not think I would tell them an untruth, but as if they thought it the strangest thing in all the world that anybody else should have felt as they have felt. "Now, sit down," I say sometimes, "and I will tell you what were my feelings when I first sought the Saviour." "Why, sir," they say, "that is just how I felt; but I did not think any one ever

went the same path that I have gone." Ah! well, it is no wonder that when we hold little acquaintance with each other in spiritual things our path should seem to be solitary; but he who knows much of the dealings of God with poor seeking sinners, will know that their experience is always very much alike, and you can generally tell one by another, while they are coming to Christ. Now, whenever the soul is truly seeking Christ it will have to seek him in the dark. When poor Lot ran out of Sodom, he had to run all the way in the twilight. The sun did not rise upon him until he got into Zoar. And so when sinners are running from their sins to the Saviour they have to run in the dark. They get no comfort and no peace, till they are enabled by simple faith to look for all to him who died upon the cross. I have in my presence this morning many poor souls under great distress. Poor heart! my text is a comfort to thee. "At evening time it shall be light." You had a little light once, the light of morality; you thought you could do something for yourself. That is all put out now. Then you had another light: you had the wax taper of ceremonies, and you thought full sure that it would light you; but that is all out now. Still you thought you could grope your way a little by the remaining twilight of your good works, but all that seems to have gone now. You think "God will utterly destroy such a wretch as I am! O sir! O sir!

'I the chief of sinners am.'"

There never lived a wretch so vile; or if there ever lived such an one, surely God must have cast him into hell at once; I am certain there is no hope for me. Why, sir, do what I may, I can not make myself any better. When I try to pray I find I can't pray as I should like; when I read the Bible it is all black against me; it is no use, when I go to the house of God the minister seems to be like Moses, only preaching the law to me—he never seems to have a word of comfort to my soul. Well, I am glad of it, poor heart, I am glad of it; far be it from me to rejoice in thy miseries as such, but I am glad thou art where thou art. I remember what the Countess of Hunt

mgdon once said to Mr. Whitfield's brother. Mr. Whitfield's brother was under great distress of mind, and one day when sitting at tea, talking of spiritual things, he said, "Your lady-ship, I know I am lost, I am certain I am!" Well, they talked to him, and they tried to rally him; but he persisted in it, that he was absolutely undone, that he was a lost man. Her lady ship clapped her hands, and said, "I am glad of it, Mr. Whitfield, I'm glad of it." He thought it was a cruel thing for her to say. He knew better when she explained herself by saying, "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost; so then, he came to seek and to save you." Now, if there be any here who are lost, I can only say, I am glad of it too, for such the mighty Shepherd came to rescue. If there are any of you who feel that you are condemned by God's law, I thank God you are; for those who are condemned by the law in their consciences shall yet be pardoned by the gospel.

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away
To Christ, and heal your wounds;
This is the glorious gospel day,
Wherein free grace abounds."

Nay, this very hour, when you have no day in your heart, when you think the evening time has come, and you must perish for ever—now is the time when God will reveal himself to you. Whilst thou hast a rag of thine own thou shalt never have Christ; whilst thou hast a farthing of thine own righteousness, thou shalt never have him; but when thou art nothing, Christ is thine; when thou hast nothing of thyself to trust to, Jesus Christ in the gospel is thy complete Saviour; he bids me tell thee he came to seek and to save such as thou art.

V. And now I am about to close, dwelling rather more largely upon the last particular—"At evening time it shall be light." If our sun do not go down ere it be noon, we may all of us expect to have an evening time of life. Either we shall be taken from this world by death, or else, if God should spare us, ere long we shall get to the evening of life. In a few more years, the sere and yellow leaf will be the fit companion

of every man and every woman. Is there anything melancholy in that? I think not. The time of old age, with all its infirmities, seems to me to be a time of peculiar blessedness and privilege to the Christian. To the worldly sinner, whose zest for pleasure has been removed by the debility of his powers and the decay of his strength, old age must be a season of tedium and pain; but to the veteran soldier of the cross, old age must assuredly be a time of great joy and blessedness.

I was thinking, the other evening, whilst riding in a delightful country, how like to evening time old age is. The sun of hot care has gone down; that sun which shone upon that early piety of ours, which had not much depth of root, and which scorched it so that it died—that sun which scorched our next true godliness, and often made it well nigh wither, and would have withered it had it not been planted by the rivers of water—that sun is now set. The good old man has no particular care now in all the world. He says to business, to the hum and noise and strife of the age in which he lives, "Thou art nought to me; to make my calling and election sure, to hold firmly this my confidence, and wait until my change comes, this is all my employment; with all your worldly pleasures and cares I have no connection." The toil of his life is all done, he has no more now to be sweating and toiling, as he had in his youth and manhood; his family have grown up, and are now no more dependent upon him; it may be, God has blessed him, and he has sufficient for the wants of his old age, or it may be that in some rustic alms-house he breathes out the last few years of his existence. How calm and quiet! Like the laborer, who, when he returns from the field at evening time casts himself upon his couch, so does the old man rest from his labors. And at evening time we gather into families, the fire is kindled, the curtains are drawn, and we sit around the family fire, to think no more of the things of the great rumbling world; and even so in old age, the family and not the world are the engrossing topic.

Did you ever notice how venerable grandsires, when they write a letter, fill it full of intelligence concerning their children? "John is ill," "Mary is well," "all our family are

in health." Very likely some business friend writes to say "Stocks are down," or, "the rate of interest is raised," but you never find *that* in any good old man's letters; he writes about his family, his lately married daughters, and all that. Just what we do at evening time; we only think of the family circle and forget the world. That is what the gray-headed old man does. He thinks of his children, and forgets all beside. Well, then, how sweet it is to think that for such an old man there is light in the darkness! "At evening time it shall be light." Dread not thy days of weariness, dread not thine hours of decay, O soldier of the cross; new lights shall burn when the old lights are quenched; new candles shall be lit when the lamps of life are dim. Fear not! The night of thy decay may be coming on, but "at evening time it shall be light." At evening time the Christian has many lights that he never had before; lit by the Holy Spirit and shining by his light. There is the light of bright experience. He can look back, and he can raise his Ebenezer, saying, "Hither, by thy help I've come." He can look back at his old Bible, the light of his youth, and he can say, "This promise has been proved to me, this covenant has been proved true. I have thumbed my Bible many a year; I have never yet thumbed a broken promise. The promises have all been kept to me; 'not one good thing has failed.'" And then, if he has served God he has another light to cheer him: he has the light of the remembrance of what good God has enabled him to do. Some of his spiritual children come in and talk of times when God blessed his conversation to their souls. He looks upon his children, and his children's children, rising up to call the Redeemer blessed; at evening time he has a light. But at the last the night comes in real earnest; he has lived long enough, and he must die. The old man is on his bed; the sun is going down, and he has no more light. "Throw up the windows, let me look for the last time into the open sky," says the old man. The sun has gone down; I can not see the mountains yonder; they are all a mass of mist; my eyes are dim, and the world is dim too. Suddenly a light shoots across his face, and he cries, "O daughter! daughter, here! I

can see another sun rising. Did you not tell me that the sun went down just now? Lo, I see another; and where those hills used to be in the landscape, those hills that were lost in the darkness, daughter, I can see hills that seem like burning brass; and methinks upon that summit I can see a city bright as jasper. Yes, and I see a gate opening, and spirits coming forth. What is that they say? O they sing! they sing! Is this death?" And ere he has asked the question, he hath gone where he needs not to answer it, for death is all unknown. Yes, he has passed the gates of pearl; his feet are on the streets of gold; his head is bedecked with a crown of immortality; the palm-branch of eternal victory is in his hand. God hath accepted him in the beloved.

> "Far from the world of grief and sin,
> With God eternally shut in,"

he is numbered with the saints in light, and the promise is fulfilled, "At evening time it shall be light."

And now, my gray-headed hearer, will it be so with thee? I remember the venerable Mr. Jay once in Cambridge, when preaching, reaching out his hand to an old man who sat just as some of you are sitting there, and saying, "I wonder whether those gray hairs are a crown of glory, or a fool's cap; they are one or else the other." For a man to be unconverted at the age to which some of you have attained is indeed to have a fool's cap made of gray hairs; but if you have a heart consecrated to Christ, to be his children now, with the full belief that you shall be his for ever, is to have a crown of glory upon your brows.

And now, young men and maidens, we shall soon be old In a little time our youthful frame shall totter; we shall need a staff by-and-by. Years are short things; they seem to us to get shorter, as each one of them runs o'er our head. My brother, thou art young as I am; say, hast thou a hope that thine even-tide shall be light? No, thou hast begun in drunkenness; and the drunkard's eventide is darkness made more dark, and after it damnation. No, young man; thou

hast begun thy life with profanity, and the swearer's even-tide hath no light, except the lurid flame of hell. Beware thou of such an even-tide as that! No; thou hast begun in gayety; take care lest that which begins in gayety ends in eternal sadness. Would God ye had all begun with Christ! Would that ye would choose wisdom; for "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Some religious men are miserable; but religion does not make them so. True religion is a happy thing. I never knew what the hearty laugh and what the happy face meant, till I knew Christ; but knowing him I trust I can live in this world like one who is not of it, but who is happy in it. Keeping my eye upward to the Saviour, I can say with David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name." and bless him most of all for this, that I know how to bless him. Ah! and if ye in your prime, in the days of your youth, have been enabled by the Holy Spirit to consecrate yourselves to God, you will, when you come to the end, look back with some degree of sorrow upon your infirmities, but with a far greater degree of joy upon the grace which began with you in childhood, which preserved you in manhood, which matured you for your old age, and which at last gathered you like a shock of corn fully ripe into the garner. May the great God and Master bless these words to us each, through **Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

# SERMON XVIII.

## THY REDEEMER.

"And thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."—ISAIAH, xli. 14.

AND why does it say, "and thy Redeemer?" What was the use of appending the Redeemer's name to this precious exhortation? By God's help it shall be the business of this evening to show why there is a peculiar blessedness in the fact that God hath not only said, "I will help thee, saith the LORD," but has added, "and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."

You will please to notice that it looks as if this were a repetition by three different persons. Israel was cast down, and Jehovah, for that is the first word—(you will notice that the word "LORD" is in capitals, and should be translated "Jehovah")—says to his poor, tried, desponding servant, "I will help thee." No sooner is that uttered than we think we shall not be straining the text if we surmise that God the Holy Spirit, the Holy One of Israel, adds his solemn affidavit also; and declares by oath and covenant, "I will help thee." Does not this, we say, look somewhat like repetition? Was it not sufficient that Jehovah the Father should declare that he would help his people! Why did the other persons of the divine Trinity unite in this solemn declaration? We think we shall be able, if God shall help us, to show great usefulness therein, especially dwelling to-night upon that word, "thy Redeemer," and marking how the repetition of the word by our Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, adds a peculiar blessedness to the exhortation—"Fear not, thou worm Jacob."

First, methinks this was added *for amplification;* secondly *for sweetness;* thirdly, *for confirmation.*

I. First, when it says, "and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel," it was added FOR AMPLIFICATION. There are some

preachers from whom you will never learn anything; not because they do not say much which is instructive, but because they just mention the instructive thought once, and immediately pass on to another thought, never expanding upon the second thought, but immediately passing on, almost without connection, to a third—just casting forth, as it were, bare thoughts, without opening them up, and explaining them to the people. Such preachers are generally complained of as being very unprofitable to the hearers. "Why," said the hearer, "it made no impression upon me; it was good, but there was so much of it that I could not recollect it. I had nothing to bring away." Other preachers, on the other hand, follow a better method. Having given one idea, they endeavor to amplify it, so that their hearers, if they are not able to receive the idea in the abstract, at least are able to lay hold upon some of its points, when they come to the amplification of it. Now, God, the great Author of the great book, God, the preacher of the truth by his prophets, when he would preach it, and when he would write it, so amplifies a fact, so extends a truth, and enlarges upon a doctrine, says, "I will help thee, saith Jehovah." That means Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. "Ah! but," said God, "my people will forget that, unless I amplify the thought; so I will even break it up; I will remind them of my Trinity. They understand my Unity; I will bid them recollect that there are Three in One, though these Three be One;" and he adds, "thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Jehovah—Redeemer—Holy One of Israel—three persons, all included, indeed, in the word Jehovah, but very likely to be forgotten unless they had been distinctly enumerated.

Now, brethren, suffer your thoughts for a moment to enlarge upon the fact, that the promise contained in this verse, "Fear not, I will help thee" (*I* will help thee), is a promise from Three Divine Persons. Hear Jehovah, the everlasting Father, saying, "I will help thee." "Mine are the ages: before the ages began, when there were no worlds, when nought had been created, from everlasting I am thy God. I am the God of election, the God of the decree, the God of the covenant; by my strength I did set fast the mountains, by my

skill I laid the pillars of the earth; and hc beams of the firmament of heaven; I spread out the sk es as a curtain, and as a tent for man to dwell in; I the Lord made all these things. '*I* will help thee.'" Then comes Jehovah the Son. "And I, also, am thy Redeemer, I am eternal; my name is wisdom. I was with God, when there were no depths, before he had digged the rivers, I was there as one brought up with him. I am Jesus, the God of ages; I am Jesus, the man of sorrows; 'I am he that liveth and was dead, I am alive for evermore.' I am the High Priest of your profession, the Intercessor before the throne, the Representative of my people. I have power with God. '*I* will help thee.'" Poor worm, thy Redeemer vows to help thee; by his bleeding hands he covenants to give thee aid. And then in comes the Holy Spirit. "And I," saith the Spirit, "am also God—not an influence, but a person—I, eternal and everlasting, co-existent with the Father and the Son—I, who did brood over chaos, when as yet the world was not brought into form and fashion, and did sow the earth with the seeds of life when I did brood over it,—I, that brought again from the dead your Lord Jesus Christ, the Shepherd of the sheep—I, who am the Eternal Spirit, by whose power the Lord Jesus did arise from the thraldom of his tomb—I, by whom souls are quickened, by whom the elect are called out of darkness into light—I, who have the power to maintain my children and preserve them to the end—'*I* will help thee.'" Now, soul, gather up these three, and dost thou want more help than they can afford? What! dost thou need mo e strength than the omnipotence of the United Trinity? Dost thou want more wisdom than exists in the Father, more love than displays itself in the Son, and more power than is manifest in the influences of the Spirit? Bring hither thine empty pitcher! Sure this well will fill it. Haste! gather up thy wants, and bring them here—thine emptiness, thy woes, thy needs. Behold, this river of God is full for thy supply. What canst thou want beside? Stand up, Christian, in this thy might. Jehovah Father, Jehovah Jesus, Jehovah Spirit,—these are with thee to help thee. This is the first thing. It is an *amplification.*

II. And now, secondly, concerning that word, "thy Redeemer," it is a SWEETENING OF THE PROMISE. Did you never notice that a promise always seems all the sweeter for having Jesus in it? All the promises are yea and amen in him; but when a promise mentions the name of the Redeemer, it imparts a peculiar blessedness to it. Brethren, it is something like, if I may represent it by such a figure, the beautiful effect of certain decorations of stained glass. There are some persons whose eyes are so weak that the light seems to be injurious to them, especially the red rays of the sun, and a glass has been invented, which rejects the rays that are injurious, and allows only those to pass which are softened and modified to the weakness of the eye. It seems as if the Lord Jesus were some such a glass as this. The grace of God the Trinity, shining through the man Christ Jesus, becomes a mellow, soft light, so that mortal eye can bear it. My God, I could not drink from thy well, if thou hadst not put there the earthen pitcher of my Saviour; but with him living waters from thy sacred well I draw. Heaven! thou art too bright; I could not bear thine insufferable light, if I had not this shade with which I cover thee; but through it, as through a mist, I do behold the halo of thy glory, undiminished in its effulgence, but somewhat diminished in their potency which would be my destruction. The Saviour seems to calm his glory, to tone it down to our poor feeble frame. His name put into this wine of heaven, does not diminish in the least degree its sparkling and its exhilirating power; but it takes out of it that deep strength which might upset an angel's brain, if he could drink to his full. It takes away the profundity of mystery, which would make the deep old wine of the kingdom intoxicating rather than cheering. Christ Jesus cast into the river of God, makes all the streams more sweet; and when the believer sees God in the person of the Saviour, he then sees the God whom he can love, and to whom with boldness he can approach. Surely I love this promise all the better, because I think I see my Saviour, with his hand all bleeding, stamping his hand upon it, and saying, "And thy Redeemer," and there is the blood-mark left upon the promise. It does seem to me as if when

God uttered that promise to the poor worm Jacob, Jesus Christ could not be still. He heard his Father say, "Fear not, worm Jacob;" and he saw the poor worm, with his head on one side, with his eyes all flowing with tears, with his heart palpitating with terror, and his arms folded in dismay; and when his Father had said, "Fear not," he stepped from behind, and whispered in a voice more soft than the voice of his Father, "Fear not, worm Jacob, it is God that speaks;" and then the soft voice says, "And it is thy Redeemer that speaks too." *He* says, "Fear not." He who loves thee, who knows thee, who has felt what thou feelest, who has passed through the woes which thou art now enduring—he who is thy Kinsman and thy Brother, he also says "Fear not, worm Jacob." Oh, it is sweet, it is precious to look upon that word, as spoken by our Redeemer.

III. And now we come to the other point. I think this is put in by way of CONFIRMATION. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses surely the whole shall be established."

"Blind unbelief is sure to err."

It needs many witnesses to make such unbelieving souls as we are, believe the promises. "Now," says God, "I will help thee." Unbelief! wilt thou doubt Jehovah? Can the "I Am that I Am" lie? Can the God of faithfulness and truth deceive thee? O unbelief! infamous traitor! wilt thou dare to doubt him? Yes, and Christ knew it would; and so he comes in and he says, "and thy Redeemer," as a second witness; whilst the Spirit is the third. "Thy Redeemer," volunteers to be the second guarantee, the other security to the faithfulness of this promise. The Father will lose his honor if he breaks his word; and I too do give as the security for the fulfillment of this promise, my troth and honor also. "Thy Redeemer" engages that he will help thee, O thou worm!

And now, I want you to read the promise, recollecting that it says, "Thy Redeemer;" and then, as you read it through, you will see how the word "Redeemer" seems to confirm it

all. Now begin. "*I* will help thee:" lay a stress on that word. If you read it so, there is one blow at your unbelief. "*I* will help thee," saith the Redeemer. "Others may not, but I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and by the bands of my lovingkindness have I drawn thee. '*I* will help thee,' though the earth forsake thee; though thy father and thy mother forsake thee, *I* will take thee up. Wilt thou doubt me? I have proved my love to thee. Behold this gash, this spear thrust in my side. Look hither at my hands: wilt thou but believe me? 'Tis I.' I said that on the waters, and I said to my people, 'Be not afraid; it is I.' I say to thee, now thou art on the waters, 'Be not afraid; *I* will help thee.' Sure thou needst not fear that I shall ever forget thee. 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.' 'I have graven thee on my hands; thy walls are ever before me.' '*I* will help thee.'" Now, you must just suppose the Saviour standing here—that Man whose garments are red with blood; you must suppose him standing where I stand to-night, and saying to you, personally, "Fear not, *I* will help you." O my Lord, I have ungratefully doubted thy promise many a time; but methinks, if I could see thee in all thy woe and sorrow for me, if I could hear thee say, "*I* will help thee," I should cast myself at thy feet, and say, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." But though he is not here to speak it, though the lips that utter it are but the lips of man, remember that he speaks through me to-night, and through his word, as truly as if he spoke himself. If some great man should by a servant, or by a letter send to you this message, "I will keep you," though you had not heard his own lips declare it, yet if you saw his own hand writing, you would say, "It is enough, I believe it; there is the master's hand writing; it is his own autograph, it is written by himself; behold the bloody signature!" It is stamped with his cross, and I his messenger am sent to-night to myself and to you, and I say to my own heart and to you, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him;"

for the Redeemer says, *I* will help thee," and if he saith "*I* will help thee," who can doubt him? who dare distrust him?

And now let us read the promise again, and lay the stress on the "will." Oh, the "wills" and the "shalls:" they are the sweetest words in the Bible. "I *will* help thee." When God says "I will," there is something in it, brethren. The will of God started worlds into existence; the will of God made nature leap from chaos; the will of God sustains all worlds, "bears the earth's huge pillars up," and establishes creation. It is God's "I will." He lets the world live; they live on the "will" of God; and if he willed that they should die, they must sink as the bubble into the breaker, when its moment has arrived. And if the "will" of God is so strong as that, may we not lay a great stress upon it here—"I *will* help thee?" There is no doubt about it. I do not say I may help thee peradventure. No; I *will*. I do not say, that possibly I may be persuaded to help thee. No; I voluntarily *will* to help thee. "I *will* help thee." I do not say that, in all probability, ninety-nine chances out of a hundred, it is likely I may help thee. No; but without allowing any peradventure, or so much as a jot or tittle of hap or hazard, I *will*. Now, is there not strength in that? Indeed, my brethren, this is enough to cheer any man's spirit, however much he may be cast down, if God the Holy Spirit does but breathe upon the text, and let its spices flow abroad into our poor souls, "Fear not, I *will* help thee."

And now we lay stress on another word: "I will *help* thee." That is very little for me to do, to *help* thee. Consider what I have done already. What! not help thee? Why, I bought thee with my blood. What! not help thee? I have died for thee; and if I have done the greater, will I not do the less? *Help* thee, my beloved! It is the least thing I will ever do for thee. I have done more, and I will do more. Before the day-star first began to shine I chose thee. "I will *help* thee." I made the covenant for thee, and exercised all the wisdom of my eternal mind in the scheming of the plan of salvation. "I will *help* thee." I became a

man for thee; I doffed my diadem, and laid aside my robe; I laid the purple of the universe aside to become a man for thee. If I did this, I will *help* thee. I gave my life, my soul, for thee; I slumbered in the grave, I descended into Hades, all for thee; I will *help* thee. It will cost me nothing. Redeeming thee cost me much, but I have all and abound. In helping thee, I am giving thee what I have bought for thee already. It is no new thing. I can do it easily. "Help thee?" Thou needst never fear that. If thou needest a thousand times as much help as thou dost need, I would give it thee; but it is little that thou dost require compared with what I have to give. 'Tis great for thee to need, but it is nothing for me to bestow. "*Help* thee?" Fear not. If there were an ant at the door of thy granary asking for help, it would not ruin thee to give him a handful of thy wheat; and thou art nothing but a tiny insect at the door of my all-sufficiency. All that thou couldst ever eat, all that thou couldst ever take, if thou wert to take on to all eternity, would no more diminish my all-sufficiency, than the drinking of the fish would diminish the sea. No; "I will *help* thee." If I have died for thee, I will not leave thee.

And now, just take the last word—"I will help *thee*." Lay the stress there. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob; I will help *thee*." If I let the stars fall, I will help *thee;* if I let all nature run to rack and ruin, I will help *thee*. If I permit the teeth of time to devour the solid pillars upon which the earth doth stand, yet I will help *thee*. I have made a covenant with the earth, "that seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, shall never cease;" but that covenant, though true, is not so great as the covenant that I have made concerning thee. And if I keep my covenant with the earth, I will certainly keep my covenant with my Son. "Fear not; I will help *thee*." Yes, thee! Thou sayest, "I am too little for help;" but I will help thee, to magnify my power; thou sayest, "I am too vile to be helped," but I will help thee to manifest my grace Thou sayest, "I have been ungrateful for former help;" but I will help thee to manifest my faithfulness. Thou sayest "But I shall still rebel, I shall still turn aside." "I will help

*thee*," to show forth my long suffering: let it be known, "I will help *thee*."

And now just conceive my Master on his cross bleeding there, looking down on you and on me. Picture him, whilst his voice falters with love and misery conjoined; and hear him. He has just now spoken to the thief, and he has said to him, "To-day, shalt thou be with me in Paradise." And after he has said that, he catches a sight of you and of me, poor and depressed, and he says, "Fear not, worm Jacob; I will help *thee;* I helped the thief—I will help *thee*. I promised him that he should be with me in paradise; I may well promise thee that thou shalt be helped. I will help thee. O Master! may thy love that prompts thee thus to speak, prompt us to believe thee.

And now hear Him again. He is exalted on high; he hath "led captivity captive and received gifts for men;"—now hear him, as in the midst of the solemn pomp of heaven he is not unmindful of his poor relations. He looks down, and he sees us in this world still struggling with sin and care and woe; he hears us claiming kingship with himself; and he says, "Worm Jacob! thou I now do reign exalted high, my love is still as great. I *will* help *thee*." I pray the Lord apply the sweetness of that pronoun to your hearts, my brethren, and to mine. "I will help *thee*." O surely when the husband speaks to the wife in the hour of darkness and sorrow, and comforts her, you can easily understand what arguments he uses, when he says, "Wife of my youth! my joy, my delight, I will help *thee!*" You can easily conceive how he enumerates times of love, seasons when he stood by her in the hour of trouble; you can easily think how he reminds her of the days of their espousals, and tells her of their struggles, and of their joys; and he says, "Wife, canst thou doubt me? No; as I am a husband I *will* help *thee!*" And now you hear the Saviour speaking of his church. "Betrothed to me ere time began, I have taken thee into union with my adorable person; and O my bride, though my palace stand in ruins, and heaven itself should shake, I *will* help thee. Forget thee? Forget my bride? Be false to my troth? Forsake my

covenant? No; never. I *will* help *thee*." Hear the mother speaking to her little child in great danger; "Child," she says, "I will help *thee*;" and then she reminds that child that she is its mother, that from her breast the child drew its needed nourishment in the days of weakness; she reminds it how she has nursed it, and dandled it upon her knee, and how in every way she has been its solace and support. 'Child!" says she, and her heart runs over—"I will help *thee!*" Why, the child never doubts it, it says, "Yes, mother, I know you will; I am sure of that, I do not need to be told it, I was certain you would, for I have had such proofs of your love." And now ought not we who love the Saviour just to let our eyes run with tears, and say, "O thou blest Redeemer! thou needst not tell us thou wilt help us, for we know thou wilt. Oh do not suppose that we doubt thee so much as to want to be told of it again; we know thou wilt help us; we are sure of it; thy former love, thine ancient love, the love of thine espousals, thy deeds of kindness, thine everlasting drawings, all these declare that thou never canst forsake us." No, no; "I *will* help *thee*."

And now, brethren, we are coming to eat the body of Christ and drink his blood in a spiritual manner; and I hope whilst we are partaking of that bread and wine, the emblems of the Saviour, we shall think we hear every mouthful of bread and every sip of wine saying out in the Master's behalf, "I *will* help *thee*, I *will* help *thee*." And then let us just frighten Satan, by cheering up our spirits through the power of the Holy Ghost, and buckling on our armor, let us go forth into the world to-morrow, to show what the Redeemer can do, when his promise is applied by the Spirit. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee." Come, bring your fears out to-night, and serve them in the worst way you can. Hang them here upon the scaffold this night. Come now, and blow them away at the great guns of the promises, let them be destroyed forever. They are renegade mutineers; let them be cut off, let them be utterly destroyed, and let us go and sing, "Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be

carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." "I *will* help *thee*," saith the Redeemer.

O sinners, I pity you, that this is not your promise. If this were all that you did lose by being out of Christ, it were enough to lose indeed. May God call you, and help you to trust in the Redeemer's blood. Amen.

# SERMON XIX.

## THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."—MARK xii. 30.

OUR Saviour said, "This is the first and great commandment." It is "*the first*" commandment—the first for *antiquity*, for this is older than even the ten commandments of the written law. Before God said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal," this law was one of the commands of his universe; for this was binding upon the angels when man was not created. It was not necessary for God to say to the angels, "Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not steal;" for such things to them were very probably impossible; but he did doubtless say to them, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" and when first Gabriel sprang out of his native nothingness at the fiat of God, this command was binding on him. This is "the first commandment," then, for antiquity. It was binding upon Adam in the garden; even before the creation of Eve, his wife, God had commanded this; before there was a necessity for any other command this was written upon the very tablets of his heart—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God."

It is "the first commandment," again, not only for antiquity, but for *dignity*. This command, which deals with God the Almighty must ever take precedence of every other. Other commandments deal with man and man, but *this* with man and his Creator. Other commands of a ceremonial kind, when disobeyed, may involve but slight consequences upon the person who may happen to offend, but this disobeyed provokes the wrath of God, and brings his ire at once upon the

sinner's head. He that stealeth committeth a gross offence, inasmuch as he hath also violated this command; but if it were possible for us to separate the two, and to suppose an offence of one command without an offence of this, then we must put the violation of this commandment in the first rank of offences. This is the king of commandments; this is the emperor of the law; it must take precedence of all those princely commands that God afterwards gave to men.

Again, it is "the first commandment," for its *justice*. If men can not see the justice of that law which says, "Love thy neighbor," if there be some difficulty to understand how I can be bound to love the man that hurts and injures me, there can be no difficulty here. "Thou shalt love thy God" comes to us with so much Divine authority, and is so ratified by the dictates of nature and our own conscience, that, verily, this command must take the first place for the justice of its demand. It is "the first" of commandments. Whichever law thou dost break, take care to keep this. If thou breakest the commandments of the ceremonial law, if thou dost violate the ritual of thy church, thine offence might be propitiated by the priest, but who can escape when this is his offence? This mandate standeth fast. Man's law thou mayest break, and bear the penalty; but if thou breakest this the penalty is too heavy for thy soul to endure; it will sink thee, man, it will sink thee like a mill-stone lower than the lowest hell. Take heed of this command above every other, to tremble at it and obey it, for it is "the first commandment."

But the Saviour said it was a "*great* commandment," and so also it is. It is "great," for it containeth in its bowels every other. When God said, "Remember to keep holy the Sabbath-day;" when he said, "Thou shalt not bow down unto the idols nor worship them,"—when he said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," he did not instance particulars which are all contained in this general mandate. This is the sum and substance of the law; and indeed even the second commandment lies within the folds of the first. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," is actually to be found within the center of this command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy

God;" for the loving of God would necessarily produce the loving of our neighbor.

It is a great command, then, for its *comprehensiveness*, and it is a great command for the immense demand which it makes upon us. It demands all our mind, all our soul, all our heart, and all our strength. Who is he that can keep it, when there is no power of manhood which is exempt from its sway? And to him that violateth this law it shall be proven that it is a great command in the greatness of its condemning power, for it shall be like a great sword having two edges, wherewith God shall slay him. It shall be like a great thunderbolt from God, wherewith he shall cast down and utterly destroy the man that goeth on in his willful breaking thereof. Hear ye, then, O Gentiles, and O house of Israel, hear ye, then, this day, this first and great commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."

I shall divide my discourse thus—first, *What saith this commandment unto us*, secondly, *What say we unto it?*

I. And in discussing the first point, WHAT SAITH THIS COMMANDMENT UNTO US? we shall divide it thus. Here is, first, the duty—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God;" here is, secondly, the measure of the duty—"Thou shalt love him with all thy heart, mind, soul, strength;" here is, thirdly, the ground of the claim, enforcing the duty—because he is "thy God." God demandeth of us to obey, simply upon the ground that he is our God.

1. To begin, then. This command *demands a duty*. That duty is, that we should love God. How many men do break this? One class of men do break it willfully and grievously; for they *hate* God. There is the infidel, who gnashes his teeth against the Almighty; the atheist, who spits the venom of his blasphemy against the person of his Maker. You will find those who rail at the very being of a God, though in their consciences they know there is a God, yet with their lips will blasphemously deny his existence. These men say there is no God, because they wish there were none. The wish is father to the thought, and the thought demands great grossness of

heart, and grievous hardness of spirit before they dare to express it in words; and even when they express it in words, it needeth much practice ere they can do it with a bold, unblushing countenance. Now this command beareth hard on all them that hate, that despise, that blaspheme, that malign God, or that deny his being, or impugn his character. O sinner! God says thou shalt love him with all thy heart; and inasmuch as thou hatest him, thou standest this day condemned to the sentence of the law.

Another class of men know there is a God, but they *neglect* him; they go through the world with indifference, "caring for none of these things." "Well," they say, "It does not signify to me whether there is a God or not." They have no particular care about him; they do not pay one half so much respect to his commands as they would to the proclamation of the Queen. They are very willing to reverence all powers that be, but he who ordained them is to be passed by and to be forgotten. They would not be bold enough and honest enough to come straight out, and despise God, and join the ranks of his open enemies, but they forget God; he is not in all their thoughts. They rise in the morning without a prayer, they rest at night without bending the knee, they go through the week's business and they never acknowledge a God. Sometimes they talk about good luck and chance, strange deities of their own brain; but God, the over-ruling God of Providence, they never talk of, though sometimes they may mention his name in flippancy, and so increase their trangressions against him. O ye despisers and neglecters of God! this command speaks to you—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

But I hear one of these gentlemen reply, "Well, sir, I make no pretensions to religion, but still I believe I am quite as good as those that do; I am quite as upright, quite as moral and benevolent. True, I do not often darken the door of a church or chapel, I do not think it necessary, but I am a right good sort; there are many, many hypocrites in the church, and therefore I shall not think of being religious." Now, my dear friend, allow me just to say one word—what business is

that of yours? Religion is a personal matter between you and your Maker. Your Maker says—"Thou shalt love me with all thine heart:" it is of no use for you to point your finger across the street, and point at a minister whose life is inconsistent, or at a deacon who is unholy, or to a member of the church who does not live up to his profession. You have just nothing to do with that. When your Maker speaks to you, he appeals to you personally; and if you should tell him, "My Lord, I will not love thee, because there are hypocrites," would not your own conscience convince you of the absurdity of your reasoning? Ought not your better judgment to whisper "Inasmuch, then, as so many are hypocrites, take heed that thou art not; and if there be so many pretenders who injure the Lord's cause by their lying pretensions, so much the more reason why thou shouldst have the real thing and help to make the church sound and honest." But no, the merchants of our cities, the tradesmen of our streets, our artisans and our workmen, the great mass of them, live in total forgetfulness of God. I do not believe that the heart of England is infidel. I do not believe that there is any vast extent of deism or atheism throughout England: the great fault of our time is the fault of indifference; people do not care whether the thing is right or not. What is it to them? They never take the trouble to search between the different professors of religion to see where the truth lies; they do not think to pay their reverence to God with all their hearts. Oh, no; they forget what God demands, and so rob him of his due. To you, to you, great masses of the population, this law doth speak with iron tongue—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

There are a class of men who are a great deal nobler than the herd of simpletons who allow the sublimities of the Godhead to be concealed by their carking care for mere sensual good. There are some who do not forget that there is a God; no, they are astronomers, and they turn their eyes to heaven, and they view the stars, and they marvel at the majesty of the Creator. Or they dig into the bowels of the

earth, and they are astonished at the magnificence of God's works of yore. Or they examine the animal, and marvel at the wisdom of God in the construction of its anatomy. They, whenever they think of God, think of him with the deepest awe, with the profoundest reverence. You never hear them curse or swear: you will find that their souls are possessed of a deep awe of the great Creator. But ah! my friends, this is not enough: this is not obedience to the command. God does not say thou shalt wonder at him, thou shalt have awe of him. He asks more than that; he says, "Thou shalt love me!" Oh! thou that seest the orbs of heaven floating in the far expanse, it is something to lift thine eye to heaven, and say—

> "These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
> Almighty, thine this universal frame.
> Thus wondrous fair; thyself, how wondrous then!
> Unspeakable, who sitt'st above these Heavens
> To us invisible, or dimly seen
> In these thy lowest works; yet these declare
> Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine."

'Tis something thus to adore the great Creator, but 'tis not all he asks. Oh! if thou couldst add to this—"He that made these orbs, that leadeth them out by their hosts, is my Father, and my heart beats with affection towards him." Then wouldst thou be obedient, but not till then. God asks not thine admiration, but thine affection. "Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with all thine heart."

There are others, too, who delight to spend time in contemplation. They believe in Jesus, in the Father, in the Spirit; they believe that there is but one God, and that these three are one. It is their delight to turn over the pages of revelation, as well as the pages of history. They contemplate God; he is to them a matter of curious study; they like to meditate upon him; the doctrines of his Word they could hear all day long. And they are very sound in the faith, extremely orthodox, and very knowing; they can fight about doctrines, they can dispute about the things of God with all their hearts; but,

alas! their religion is like a dead fish, cold and stiff, and when you take it into your hand, you say there is no life in it; their souls were never stirred with it; their hearts were never thrown into it. They can contemplate, but they cannot love; they can meditate, but they cannot commune; they can think of God, but they can never throw up their souls to him, and clasp him in the arms of their affections. Ah, to you, cold-blooded thinkers—to you, this text speaks. Oh! thou that canst contemplate, but canst not love,—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."

Another man starts up, and he says, "Well, this command does not bear on me; I attend my place of worship twice every Sunday; I have family prayer. I am very careful not to get up of a morning without saying a form of prayer; I sometimes read my Bible; I subscribe to many charities." Ah! my friend, and you may do all that, without loving God. Why, some of you go to your churches and chapels as if you were going to be horsewhipped. It is a dull and dreary thing to you. You dare not break the Sabbath, but you would, if you could. You know very well, that if it were not for a mere matter of fashion and custom, you would sooner by half be anywhere else, than in God's house. And as for prayer, why, it is no delight to you; you do it, because you think you ought to do it. Some indefinable sense of duty rests upon you; but you have no delight in it. You talk of God with great propriety, but you never talk of him with love. Your heart never bounds at the mention of his name; your eyes never glisten at the thought of his attributes; your soul never leapeth when you meditate on his works, for your heart is all untouched, and while you are honoring God with your lips, your heart is far from him, and you are still disobedient to this commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God."

And now, my hearers, do you understand this command ment? Do I not see many of you seeking to look for loop holes through which to escape? Do I not think I see some of you striving to make a breach in this divine wall which girds us all. You say, "I never do anything against God." Nay, my friend, that is not it: it is not what thou dost not

do—it is this, "Dost thou *love* him?" "Well, sir, but I never violate any of the proprieties of religion." No, that is not it; the command is, "Thou shalt *love* him." "Well, sir, but I do a great deal for God; I teach in a Sunday school, and so on." Ah! I know; but dost thou *love* him? It is the heart he wants, and he will not be content without it. "Thou shalt ove the Lord thy God." That is the law, and though no man can keep it since Adam's fall, yet the law is as much binding upon every son of Adam this day, as when God first of all pronounced it. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God."

2. That brings us to the second point—*the measure of this law.* How much am I to love God? Where shall I fix the point? I am to love my neighbor as I love myself. Am I to love my God more than that? Yes, certainly. The measure is even greater. We are not bound to love ourselves with all our mind, and soul, and strength, and therefore we are not bound to love our neighbor so. The measure is a greater one. We are bound to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

And, we deduce from that, first, that we are to love God *supremely.* Thou art to love thy wife, O husband. Thou canst not love her too much, except in one case, if thou shouldst love her before God, and prefer her pleasure to the pleasure of the Most High. Then wouldst thou be an idolater. Child! thou art to love thy parents; thou canst not love him too much who begat thee, nor her too much who brought thee forth; but remember, there is one law that doth override that. Thou art to love thy God more than thy father or thy mother. He demands thy first, and thy highest affection; thou art to love him "with all thy heart." We are allowed to love our relatives: we are taught to do so. He that doth not love his own family is worse than a heathen man and a publican. But we are not to love the dearest object of our hearts, so much as we love God. Ye may erect little thrones for those whom ye rightly love; but God's throne must be a glorious high throne; you may set them upon the steps, but God must sit on the very seat itself. He is to be enthroned, the royal One within your heart, the king of your affections.

Say, say hearer, hast thou kept this commandment? I know I have not; I must plead guilty before God; I must cast myself before him, and acknowledge my transgression. But, nevertheless, there standeth the commandment—"Thou shalt love God with all thy heart"—that is, thou shalt love him *supremely.*

Note, again, that from the text we may deduce that a man is bound to love God *heartily:* that is plain enough, for it says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Yes, there is to be in our love to God a heartiness. We are to throw our whole selves into the love that we give to him. Not the kind of love that some people give to their fellows, when they say, "Be ye warmed and filled," and nothing more. No: our heart is to have its whole being absorbed into God, so that God is the hearty object of its pursuit and its most mighty love. See how the word "all" is repeated again and again. The whole going forth of the being, the whole stirring up of the soul, is to be for God only. "With *all* thy heart."

Again: as we are to love God heartily, we are to love him with *all our souls.* Then we are to love him with all our life; for that is the meaning of it. If we are called to die for God, we are to prefer God before our own life. We shall never reach the fullness of this commandment, till we get as far as the martyrs, who rather than disobey God would be cast into the furnace, or devoured by wild beasts. We must be ready to give up house, home, liberty, friends, comfort, joy, and life, at the command of God, or else we have not carried out this commandment, "Thou shalt love him with all thy heart and with all thy life."

And, next we are to love God with all our *mind.* That is, the intellect is to love God. Now, many men believe in the existence of a God, but they do not love that belief. They know there is a God, but they greatly wish there were none. Some of you to-day would be very pleased, ye would set the bells a-ringing, if ye believed there were no God. Why, if there were no God, then you might live just as you liked; if there were no God, then you might run riot and have no fear

of future consequences. It would be to you the greatest joy that could be, if you heard that the eternal God had ceased to be. But the Christian never wishes any such a thing as that. The thought that there is a God is the sunshine of his existence. His intellect bows before the Most High; not like a slave who bends his body because he must, but like the angel who prostrates himself because he loves to adore his Maker. His intellect is as fond of God as his imagination. "Oh!" he saith, "My God, I bless thee that thou art; for thou art my highest treasure, my richest and my rarest delight. I love thee with all my intellect; I have neither thought, nor judgment, nor conviction, nor reason, which I do not lay at thy feet, and consecrate to thine honor.

And, once again, this love to God is to be characterized by *activity;* for we are to love Him with all our heart, heartily —with all our soul, that is, to the laying down of our life— with all our mind, that is mentally; and we are to love him with all our *strength*, that is, *actively*. I am to throw my whole soul into the worship and adoration of God. I am not to keep back a single hour, or a single farthing of my wealth, or a single talent that I have, or a single atom of strength, bodily or mental, from the worship of God. I am to love him with all my strength.

Now, what man ever kept this commandment? Surely, none; and no man ever can keep it. Hence, then, the necessity of a Saviour. O! that we might by this commandment be smitten to the earth, that our self-righteousness may be broken in pieces by this great hammer of "the first and great commandment!" But oh! my brethren, how may we wish that we could keep it! for, could we keep this command intact, unbroken, it would be a heaven below. The happiest of creatures are those that are the most holy, and that unreservedly love God.

3. And now, very briefly, I have just to state *God's claim* upon which he bases this commandment. "Thou shalt love him with all thy heart, soul, mind, strength." Why? First, because he is the Lord—that is, Jehovah; and secondly, because he is thy God.

Man, the creature of a day, thou oughtest to love Jehovah *for what he is.* Behold, him whom thou canst not behold! Lift up thine eyes to the seventh heaven; see where in dreadful majesty, the brightness of his skirts makes the angels veil their faces, lest the light, too strong for even them, should smite them with eternal blindness. See ye him, who stretched the heavens like a tent to dwell in, and then did weave into their tapestry, with golden needle, stars that glitter in the darkness. Mark ye him who spread the earth, and created man upon it. And hear ye what he is. He is all-sufficient, eternal, self-existent, unchangeable, omnipotent, omniscient! Wilt thou not reverence him? He is good, he is loving, he is kind, he is gracious. See the bounties of his providence; behold the plenitude of his grace! Wilt thou not love Jehovah, because he is Jehovah?

But thou art most of all bound to love him *because he is thy God.* He is thy God *by creation.* He made thee; thou didst not make thyself. God, the Almighty, though he might use instruments, was nevertheless the sole creator of man. Though he is pleased to bring us into the world by the agency of our progenitors, yet is he as much our Creator as he was the Creator of Adam, when he formed him of clay and made him man. Look at this marvelous body of thine: see how God hath put the bones together, so as to be of the greatest service and use to thee. See how he hath arranged thy nerves and blood vessels: mark the marvelous machinery which he has employed to keep thee in life! O thing of an hour! wilt thou not love him that made thee? Is it possible that thou canst think of him who formed thee in his hand, and molded thee by his will, and yet wilt thou not love him who hath fashioned thee?

Again, consider, he is *thy* God, for *he preserves thee.* Thy table is spread, but he spread it for thee. The air that thou dost breathe is a gift of his charity; the clothes that thou hast on thy back are gifts of his love; thy life depends on him One wish of his infinite will would have brought thee to the grave, and given thy body to the worms; and at this moment, though thou art strong and hearty, thy life is absolutely dependent upon him. Thou mayest die where thou art, in

stanter: thou art out of hell only as the result of his goodness. Thou wouldst be at this hour sweltering in flames unquenchable, had not his sovereign love preserved thee. Traitor though thou mayest be to him, an enemy to his cross and cause, yet he is thy God, so far as this, for he made thee and he keeps thee alive. Surely, thou mayest wonder that he should keep thee alive, when thou refusest to love him. Man! thou wouldst not keep a horse that did not work for thee. Would you keep a servant in your house who insulted you? Would you spread bread upon his table, and find livery for his back, if instead of doing your will and good pleasure he would be his own master, and would run counter to you? Certainly you would not. And yet here is God feeding you, and you are rebelling against him. Swearer! the lip with which you cursed your Maker is sustained by him; the very lungs that you employ in blasphemy are inspired by him with the breath of life, else you had ceased to be. O! strange that you should eat God's bread, and then lift up your heel against him; O! marvelous that ye should sit at the table of his providence and be clothed in the livery of his bounty, and yet that you should turn round and spit against high heaven, and lift the puny hand of your rebellion against the God that made you, and that preserves you in being. O, if instead of our God we had one like unto ourselves to deal with, my brethren, we should not have patience with our fellow-creatures for an hour. I marvel at God's long-suffering toward men. I see the foul-mouthed blasphemer curse his God. O God! how canst thou endure it? Why dost thou not smite him to the ground? If a gnat should torment me, should I not in one moment crush it? And what is man compared with his Maker? Not one half so great as an emmet compared with man. O! my brethren, we may well be astonished that God hath mercy upon us, after all our violations of this high command. But I stand here to-day his servant, and from myself and from you I claim for God, because he is God, because he is our God and our Creator—I claim the love of all hearts, I claim the obedience of all souls and of all minds, and the consecration of all our strength.

O people of God, I need not speak to you. You know that God is your God in a special sense; therefore you ought to love him with a special love.

II. This is what the commandment says to us. I shall be very short indeed upon the second head, which is, WHAT HAVE WE TO SAY TO IT?

What hast thou to say to this command, O man? Have I one here so profoundly brainless as to reply, "I intend to keep it, and I believe I can perfectly obey it, and I think I can get to heaven by obedience to it?" Man, thou art either a fool, or else willfully ignorant; for sure, if thou dost understand this commandment, thou wilt at once hang down thine hands, and say, "Obedience to that is quite impossible; thorough and perfect obedience to that no man can hope to reach to! Some of you think you will go to heaven by your good works, do you? This is the first stone that you are to step upon—I am sure it is too high for your reach. You might as well try to climb to heaven by the mountains of earth, and take the Himalayas to be your first step; for surely when you had stepped from the ground to the summit of Chimborazo you might even then despair of ever stepping to the height of this great commandment; for to obey this must ever be an impossibility. But remember, you can not be saved by your works, if you can not obey this entirely, perfectly, constantly, for ever.

"Well," says one, "I dare say if I try and obey it as well as I can, that will do." No, sir, it will not. God demands that you perfectly obey this, and if you do not perfectly obey it he will condemn you. "Oh!" cries one, "who then can be saved?" Ah! that is the point to which I wish to bring you. Who, then can be saved by this law? Why, no one in the world. Salvation by the works of the law is proved to be a clean impossibility. None of you, therefore, will say you will try to obey it, and so hope to be saved. I hear the best Christian in the world groan out his thoughts—"O God," saith he, "I am guilty; and shouldst thou cast me into hell I dare not say otherwise. I have broken this command from my youth up, even since my conversion; I have violated it

every day; I know that if thou shouldst lay justice to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, I must be swept away for ever. Lord, I renounce my trust in the law; for by it I know I can never see thy face and be accepted." But hark! I hear the Christian say another thing. "Oh!" saith he to the commandment, "Commandment I can not keep thee, but my Saviour kept thee, and what my Saviour did, he did for all them that believe; and now, O law, what Jesus did is mine. Hast thou any question to bring against me? Thou demandest that I should keep this commandment wholly: lo, my Saviour kept it wholly for me, and he is my substitute; what I can not do myself my Saviour has done for me; thou canst not reject the work of the substitute, for God accepted it in the day when he raised him from the dead. O law! shut thy mouth for ever; thou canst never condemn me; though I break thee a thousand times, I put my simple trust in Jesus only; his righteousness is mine, and with it I pay the debt and satisfy thy hungry mouth."

"Oh!" ries one, "I wish I could say that I could thus escape the wrath of the law! Oh that I knew that Christ did keep the law for me!" Stop, then, and I will tell you. Do you feel to-day that you are guilty, lost, and ruined? Do you with tears in your eyes confess that none but Jesus can do you good? Are you willing to give up all trusts, and cast yourself alone on him who died upon the cross? Can you look to Calvary, and see the bleeding sufferer, all crimson with streams of gore? Can you say

> "A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
> Into thine arms I fall;
> Jesus, be thou my righteousness,
> My Saviour and my all!"

Canst say that? Then he kept the law for you, and the law can not condemn whom Christ has absolved. If Law comes to you and says, "I will damn you because you did not keep the law," tell him that he dares not touch a hair of your head, for though you did not keep it, Christ kept it for you, and Christ's righteousness is yours; tell him there is the money

and though you did not coin it Christ did; and tell him, when you have paid him all he asks for, he dares not touch you; you must be free, for Christ has satisfied the law.

And after that—and here I conclude—O child of God I know what thou wilt say; after thou hast seen the law satisfied by Jesus thou wilt fall on thy knees and say, "Lord, I thank thee that this law can not condemn me, for I believe in Jesus. But now, Lord, help me from this time forth for ever to keep it. Lord, give me a new heart, for this old heart never will love thee! Lord, give me a new life, for this old life is too vile. Lord, give me a new understanding; wash my mind with the clean water of the Spirit; come and dwell in my judgment, my memory, my thought; and then give me the new strength of thy Spirit, and then will I love thee with all my new heart, with all my new life, with all my re newed mind, and with all my spiritual strength, from this time forth, even for evermore."

May the Lord convince you of sin, by the energy of his divine Spirit, and bless this simple sermon, for Jesus's sake! Amen.

# SERMON XX.

## AWAKE! AWAKE!

"Therefore let us not sleep as do others but let us watch and be sober." —1 THESS., v. 6.

WHAT sad things sin hath done. This fair world of ours was once a glorious temple, every pillar of which reflected the goodness of God, and every part of which was a symbol of good, but sin has spoiled and marred all the metaphors and figures that might be drawn from earth. It has so deranged the divine economy of nature, that those things which were inimitable pictures of virtue, goodness, and divine plenitude of blessing, have now become the figures and representatives of sin. 'Tis strange to say, but it is strangely true, that the very best gifts of God have by the sin of man become the worst pictures of man's guilt. Behold the flood! breaking forth from its fountains, it rushes across the fields, bearing plenty on its bosom; it covers them awhile, and anon it doth subside and leaves upon the plain a fertile deposit, into which the farmer shall cast his seed and reap an abundant harvest. One would have called the breaking forth of water a fine picture of the plenitude of providence, the magnificence of God's goodness to the human race; but we find that sin has appropriated that figure to itself. The beginning of sin is like the breaking forth of waters. See the fire! how kindly God hath bestowed upon us that element, to cheer us in the midst of winter's frosts. Fresh from the snow and from the cold we rush to our household fire, and there by our hearth we warm [illegible] glad are we. Fire is a rich picture of the di[illegible]he Spirit, a holy emblem of the zeal of the [illegible]sin hath touched this, and the tongue [illegible] set on fire of hell," we are told, and

it is so evidently full often, when it uttereth blasphemy and slanders; and Jude lifts up his hand and exclaims, when he looks upon the evils caused by sin, "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth." And then there is sleep, one of the sweetest of God's gifts, fair sleep

"Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep."

Sleep God hath selected as the very figure for the repose of the blessed. "They that sleep in Jesus," saith the Scripture. David puts it amongst the peculiar gifts of grace: "So he giveth his beloved sleep." But alas! sin could not let even this alone. Sin did over-ride even this celestial metaphor; and though God himself had employed sleep to express the excellence of the state of the blessed, yet sin must have even this profaned, ere itself can be expressed. Sleep is employed in our text as a picture of a sinful condition. "Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober."

With that introduction, I shall proceed at once to the text. The "sleep" of the text is *an evil to be avoided.* In the second place, the word "therefore" is employed to show us that there are *certain reasons for the avoiding of this sleep.* And since the apostle speaks of this sleep with sorrow, it is to teach us that there are some, whom he calls "others," *over whom it is our business to lament*, because they sleep, and do not watch, and are not sober.

I. We commence, then, in the first place, by endeavoring to point out the EVIL WHICH THE APOSTLE INTENDS TO DESCRIBE UNDER THE TERM SLEEP. The apostle speaks of "others" who are asleep. If you turn to the original you will find that the word translated "others" has a more emphatic meaning. It might be rendered (and Horne so renders it) "the refuse," —"Let us not sleep as do *the refuse*," the common herd, the ignoble spirits, those who have no mind above the troubles of earth. "Let us not sleep as do the others," the base ignoble multitude who are not alive to the high and celestial calling of a Christian. "Let us not sleep as do the refuse of mankind." And you will find that the word "sleep," in the ori-

ginal, has also a more emphatic sense. It signifies a deep sleep, a profound slumber; and the apostle intimates, that the refuse of mankind are now in a profound slumber. We will now try if we can explain what he meant by it.

First, the apostle meant, that the refuse of mankind *are in a state of deplorable ignorance.* They that sleep know nothing. There may be merriment in the house, but the sluggard shareth not in its gladness; there may be death in the family but no tear bedeweth the cheek of the sleeper. Great events may have transpired in the world's history, but he wots not of them. An earthquake may have tumbled a city from its greatness, or war may have devastated a nation, or the banner of triumph may be waving in the gale, and the clarions of his country may be saluting us with victory, but he knoweth nothing.

"Their labor and their love are lost,
Alike unknowing and unknown."

The sleeper knoweth not anything. Behold how the refuse of mankind are alike in this! Of some things they know much, but of spiritual things they know nothing; of the divine person of the adorable Redeemer they have no idea; of the sweet enjoyments of a life of piety they can not even make a guess; toward the high enthusiasms and the inward raptures of the Christian they can not mount. Talk to them of divine doctrines, and they are to them a riddle; tell them of sublime experiences, and they seem to them to be enthusiastic fancies. They know nothing of the joys that are to come; and alas! for them, they are oblivious of the evils which shall happen to them if they go on in their iniquity. The mass of mankind are ignorant; they know not; they have not the knowledge of God, they have no fear of Jehovah before their eyes; but, blind-folded by the ignorance of this world, they march on through the paths of lust to that sure and dreadful end, the everlasting ruin of their souls. Brethren, if we be saints, let us not be ignorant as are others. Let us search the Scriptures, for in them we have eternal life, for they lo tes-

tify of Jesus. Let us be diligent; let not the Word depart out of our hearts; let us meditate therein both by day and night, that we may be as the tree planted by the rivers of water. "Let us not sleep as do others."

Again, sleep pictures *a state of insensibility*. There may be much knowledge in the sleeper, hidden, stored away in his mind, which might be well developed, if he could but be awakened. But he hath no sensibility, he knoweth nothing. The burglar hath broken into the house; the gold and silver are both in the robber's hands; the child is being murdered by the cruelty of him that hath broken in; but the father slumbereth, though all the gold and silver that he hath, and his most precious child, are in the hands of the destroyer. He is unconscious, how can he feel, when sleep had utterly sealed his senses! Lo! in the street there is mourning. A fire hath just now burned down the habitation of the poor, and houseless beggars are in the street. They are crying at his window, and asking him for help. But he sleeps, and what wots he, though the night be cold, and though the poor are shivering in the blast? He hath no consciousness; he feeleth not for them. There! take the title-deed of his estate, and burn the document. There! set light to his farm-yard! burn up all that he hath in the field; kill his horse and destroy his cattle; let now the fire of God descend and burn up his sheep; let the enemy fall upon all that he hath and devour it. He sleeps as soundly as if he were guarded by the angel of the Lord.

Such are the refuse of mankind. But alas! that we should have to include in that word "refuse" the great bulk thereof! How few there are that feel spiritually! They feel acutely enough any injury to their body, or to their estate; but alas! for their spiritual concerns they have no sensation whatever! They are standing on the brink of hell, but they tremble not; the anger of God is burning against them, but they fear not the sword of Jehovah is unsheathed, but terror doth not seize upon them. They proceed with the merry dance; they drink the bowl of intoxicating pleasure; they revel and they riot still do they sing the lascivious song; yea, they do more than this; in their vain dreams they do defy the Most High

whereas, if they were once awakened to the consciousness of their state, the marrow of their bones would melt, and their heart would dissolve like wax in the midst of their bowels. They are asleep, indifferent and unconscious. Do what you may to them; let every thing be swept away that is hopeful, that might give them cheer when they come to die, yet they feel it not; for how should a sleeper feel anything? But, "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober."

Again: the sleeper *can not defend himself*. Behold yonder prince, he is a strong man, ay, and a strong man armed. He hath entered into the tent. He is wearied. He hath drunken the woman's milk; he hath eaten her "butter in a lordly dish;" he casteth himself down upon the floor, and he slumbereth. And now she draweth nigh. She hath with her her hammer and her nail. Warrior! thou couldst break her into atoms with one blow of thy mighty arm; but thou canst not now defend thyself. The nail is at his ear, the woman's hand is on the hammer, and the nail hath pierced his skull; for when he slept he was defenceless. The banner of Sisera had waved victoriously over mighty foes; but now it is stained by a woman. Tell it, tell it, tell it! The man, who when he was awake, made nations tremble, dies by the hand of a feeble woman when he sleepeth.

Such are the refuse of mankind. They are asleep; they have no power to resist temptation. Their moral strength is departed, for God is departed from them. There is the temptation to lust. They are men of sound principle in business matters, and nothing could make them swerve from honesty; but lasciviousness destroyeth them; they are taken like a bird in the snare; they are caught in a trap; they are utterly subdued. Or, mayhap, it is another way that they are conquered. They are men that would not do an unchaste act, or even think a lascivious thought, they scorn it. But they have another weak point, they are entrapped by the glass. They are taken and they are destroyed by drunkenness. Or, if they can resist these things, and are inclined neither to looseness of life nor to excess in living, yet mayhap covetousness entereth into

them; by the name of prudence it slideth into their hearts, and they are led to grasp after treasure and to heap up gold, even though that gold be wrung out of the veins of the poor, and though they do suck the blood of the orphan. They seem to be unable to resist their passion. How many times have I been told by men, "I can not help it, sir, do what I may; I resolve, I re-resolve, but I do the same; I am defenceless; I can not resist the temptation!" Oh, of course you can not, while you are asleep. O Spirit of the living God! wake up the sleeper! Let sinful sloth and presumption both be startled, lest haply Moses should come their way, and finding them asleep should hang them on the gallows of infamy for ever.

Now, I come to give another meaning to the word "sleep." I hope there have been some of my congregation who have been tolerable easy whilst I have described the first three things, because they have thought that they were exempt in those matters. But sleep signifies also *inactivity*. The farmer can not plow his field in his sleep, neither can he cast the grain into the furrows, nor watch the clouds, nor reap his harvest. The sailor can not reef his sail, nor direct his ship across the ocean, whilst he slumbereth. It is not possible that on the Exchange, or the mart, or in the house of business, men should transact their affairs with their eyes fast closed in slumber. It would be a singular thing to see a nation of sleepers; for they would be a nation of idle men. They must all starve; they would produce no wealth from the soil; they would have nothing for their backs, nought for clothing and nought for food. But how many we have in the world that are inactive through sleep! Yes, I say inactive. I mean by that, that they are active enough in one direction, but they are inactive in the right. Oh how many men there are that are totally inactive in anything that is for God's glory, or for the welfare of their fellow creatures! For themselves, they can "rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness;"—for their children, which is an alias for themselves, they can toil until their fingers ache—they can weary themselves until their eyes are red in their sockets, till the brain whirls, and they can do no more. But for God they can do nothing. Some

say they have no time, others frankly confess that they have no will: for God's church they would not spend an hour, whilst for this world's pleasure they could lay out a month. For the poor they can not spend their time and attention. They may haply have time to spare for themselves and for their own amusment; but for holy works, for deeds of charity, and for pious acts they declare they have no leisure; whereas, the fact is, they have no will.

Behold ye, how many professing Christians there are that are asleep in this sense! They are inactive. Sinners are dying in the street by hundreds; men are sinking into the flames of eternal wrath, but they fold their arms, they pity the poor perishing sinner, but they do nothing to show that their pity is real. They go to their places of worship; they occupy their well-cushioned easy pew; they wish the minister to feed them every Sabbath; but there is never a child taught in the Sunday-school by them; there is never a tract distributed at the poor man's honse; there is never a deed done which might be the means of saving souls. We call them good men; some of them we even elect to the office of deacons; and no doubt good men they are; they are as good as Anthony meant to say that Brutus was honorable, when he said, "So are we all, all honorable men." So are we all, all good, if they be good. But these are good, and in some sense—good for nothing; for they just sit and eat the bread, but they do not plow the field; they drink the wine, but they will not raise the vine that doth produce it. They think that they are to live unto themselves, forgetting that "no man liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself." Oh, what a vast amount of sleeping we have in all our churches and chapels; for truly if our churches were once awake, so far as material is concerned, there are enough converted men and women, and there is enough talent with them, and enough money with them, and enough time with them, God granting the abundance of His Holy Spirit, which he would be sure to do if they were all zealous—there is enough to preach the gospel in every corner of the earth. The church does not need to stop for want of instruments, or for want of agencies; we have everything

now except the will; we have all that we may expect God to give for the conversion of the world, except just a heart for the work, and the Spirit of God poured out into our midst. Oh! brethren, "let us not sleep as do others." You will find the "others" in the church and in the world: "the refuse" of both are sound asleep.

Ere, however, I can dismiss this first point of explanation, it is necessary for me just to say that the apostle himself furnishes us with part of an exposition; for the second sentence, "let us watch and be sober," implies that the reverse of these things is the sleep, which he means. "Let us watch." There are many that never watch. They never watch against sin; they never watch against the temptations of the enemy; they do not watch against themselves, nor against "the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life." They do not watch for opportunities to do good; they do not watch for opportunities to instruct the ignorant, to confirm the weak, to comfort the afflicted, to succor them that are in need; they do not watch for opportunities of glorifying Jesus, or for times of communion; they do not watch for the promises; they do not watch for answers to their prayers; they do not watch for the second coming of our Lord Jesus. These are the refuse of the world: they watch not because they are asleep. But let us *watch:* so shall we prove that we are not slumberers.

Again: let us "*be sober.*" Albert Barnes says, this most of all refers to abstinence, or temperance in eating and drinking, Calvin says, not so; this refers more especially to the spirit of moderation in the things of the world. Both are right; it refers to both. There be many that are not sober; they sleep because they are not so; for insobriety leadeth to sleep. They are not sober—they are drunkards, they are gluttons. They are not sober—they can not be content to do a little business—they want to do a great deal. They are not sober—they can not carry on a trade that is sure—they must speculate. They are not sober—if they lose their property, their spirit is cast down within them, and they are like men that are drunken with wormwood. If on the other hand, they get

rich, they are not sober: they so set their affections upon things on earth that they become intoxicated with pride, because of their riches—become purse-proud, and need to have the heavens lifted up higher, lest their heads should dash against the stars. How many people there are that are not sober! Oh! I might especially urge this precept upon you at this time, my dear friends. We have hard times coming, and the times are hard enough now. Let us be sober. The fearful panic in America has mainly risen from disobedience to this command—"Be sober;' and if the professors of America had obeyed this commandment, and had been sober, the panic might at any rate have been mitigated, if not totally avoided. Now, in a little time, you who have any money laid by will be rushing to the bank to have it drawn out, because you fear that the bank is tottering. You will not be sober enough to have a little trust in your fellow-men, and help them through their difficulty, and so be a blessing to the commonwealth. And you who think there is anything to be got by lending your money at usury will not be content with lending what you have, but you will be extorting and squeezing your poor debtors, that you may get the more to lend. Men are seldom content to get rich slowly, but he that hasteth to be rich shall not be innocent. Take care, my brethren—if any hard times should come, if commercial houses should smash, and banks be broken—take care to be sober. There is nothing will get us over a panic so well as every one of us trying to keep our spirits up—just rising in the morning and saying, "Times are very hard, and to-day I may lose my all; but fretting will not help it; so just let me set a bold heart against hard sorrow, and go to my business. The wheels of trade may stop; I bless God, my treasure is in heaven; I can not be bankrupt. I have set my affections on the things of God; I can not lose those things. There is my jewel; there is my heart!" Why, if all men could do that, it would tend to create public confidence; but the cause of the great ruin of many men is the covetousness of all men, and the fear of some. If we could all go through the world with confidence, and with boldness, and with courage, there is nothing in the world that could avert

the shock so well. Come, I suppose, the shock must; and there are many men now present, who are very respectable, who may expect to be beggars ere long. Your business is, so to put your trust in Jehovah that you may be able to say, "Though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will I not fear;" and doing that, you will be creating more probabilities for the avoidance of your own destruction than by any other means which the wisdom of man can dictate to you. "Let us not be intemperate in business, as are others; but let us awake. "Let us not sleep"—not be carried away by the somnambulism of the world, for what it is better than that?—activity and greed in sleep; "but let us watch and be sober." Oh, Holy Spirit, help us to watch and be sober.

II. Thus I have occupied a great deal of time in explaining the first point—What was the sleep which the apostle meant? And now you will notice that the word "therefore" implies that there are CERTAIN REASONS FOR THIS. I shall give you these reasons; and if I should cast them somewhat into a dramatic form, you must not wonder; they will the better perhaps, be remembered. "Therefore," says the apostle, "let us not sleep."

We shall first look at the chapter itself for our reasons. The first reason precedes the text. The apostle tells us that "we are all the children of *the light* and of the day; *therefore* let us not sleep as do others." I marvel not when, as I walk through the streets after nightfall, I see every shop closed, and every window-blind drawn down; and I see the light in the upper room significant of retirement to rest. I wonder not that a half an hour later my footfall startles me, and I find none in the streets. Should I ascend the staircase, and look into the sleeper's placid countenances, I should not wonder; for it is night, the proper time for sleep. But if, some morning, at eleven or twelve o'clock, I should walk down the streets and find myself alone, and notice every shop closed, and every house straitly shut up, and hearken to no noise, I should say, "'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis wonderful

What are these people at? 'Tis day-time, and yet they are all asleep. I should be inclined to seize the first rapper I could find, and give a double knock, and rush to the next door, and ring the bell, and so all the way down the street, or go to the police station, and wake up what men I found there, and bid them make a noise in the street; or go for the fire engine, and bid the firemen rattle down the road and try to wake these people up. For I should say to myself, "There is some pestilence here; the angel of death must have flown through these streets during the night and killed all these people, or else they would have been sure to have been awake." Sleep in the daytime is utterly incongruous. "Well, now," says the apostle Paul, "ye people of God, it is day-time with you; the sun of righteousness has risen upon you with healing in his wings; the light of God's Spirit is in your conscience; ye have been brought out of darkness into marvellous light; for you to be asleep, for a church to slumber, is like a city a-bed in the day, like a whole town slumbering when the sun is shining. It is untimely and unseemly."

And now, if you look to the text again, you will find there is another argument. "Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love." So, then, it seems, it is *war-time;* and therefore, again, it is unseemly to slumber. There is a fortress, yonder, far away in India. A troop of those abominable Sepoys have surrounded it. Blood-thirsty hell-hounds, if they once gain admission, they will rend the mother and her children, and cut the strong man in pieces. They are at the gates: their cannon are loaded, their bayonets thirst for blood, and their swords are hungry to slay. Go through the fortress, and the people are all asleep. There is the warder on the tower, nodding on his bayonet. There is the captain in his tent, with his pen in his hand, and his dispatches before him, asleep at the table. There are soldiers lying down in their tents, ready for the war, but all slumbering. There is not a man to be seen keeping watch there is not a sentry there. All are asleep. Why, my friends, you would say, "Whatever is the matter here? What can it be? Has some great wizard been waving his

wand, and put a spell upon them all? Or are they all mad? Have their minds fled? Sure, to be asleep in war-time is indeed outrageous. Here! take down that trumpet; go close up to the captain's ear, and blow a blast, and see if it does not awake him in a moment. Just take away that bayonet from the soldier that is asleep on the walls, and give him a sharp prick with it, and see if he does not awake." But surely, surely, nobody can have patience with people asleep, when the enemy surround the walls and are thundering at the gates.

Now, Christians, this is your case. Your life is a life of warfare; the world, the flesh, and the devil; that hellish trinity, and your poor flesh is a wretched mudwork behind which to be intrenched. Are you asleep? Asleep, when Satan has fire-balls of lust to hurl into the windows of your eyes—when he has arrows of temptation to shoot into your heart—when he has snares into which to trap your feet? Asleep, when he has undermined your very existence, and when he is about to apply the match with which to destroy you, unless sovereign grace prevents? Oh! sleep not, soldier of the cross! To sleep in war-time is utterly inconsistent. Great Spirit of God forbid that we should slumber.

But now, leaving the chapter itself, I will give you one or two other reasons that will, I trust, move Christian people to awake out of their sleep. "*Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!*" Then comes the ringing of a bell. What is this? Here is a door marked with a great white cross. Lord, have mercy upon us! All the houses down that street seem to be marked with that white death cross. What is this? Here is the grass growing in the streets; here are Cornhill and Cheapside deserted; no one is found treading the solitary pavement; there is not a sound to be heard but those horse-hoofs like the hoofs of death's pale horse upon the stones, the ringing of that bell that sounds the death-knell to many, and the rumbling of the wheels of that cart, and the dreadful cry, "Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!" Do you see that house? A physician lives there. He is a man who has great

skill, and God has lent him wisdom. But a little while ago, whilst in his study, God was pleased to guide his mind, and he discovered the secret of the plague. He was plague-smitten himself, and ready to die; but he lifted the blessed phial to his lips, and he drank a draught and cured himself. Do you believe what I am about to tell you? Can you imagine it? That man has the prescription that will heal all these people; he has it in his pocket. He has the medicine which, if once distributed in those streets, would make the sick rejoice, and put that dead man's bell away. And he is asleep! he is asleep! He is asleep! O ye heavens! why do ye not fall and crush the wretch? O earth! how couldst thou bear this demon upon thy bosom? Why not swallow him up quick? He has the medicine; he is too lazy to go and tell forth the remedy. He has the cure, and is too idle to go out and administer it to the sick and the dying! No, my friends, such an inhuman wretch could not exist! But I can see him here to-day. There are you! You know the world is sick with the plague of sin, and you yourself have been cured by the remedy which has been provided. You are asleep, inactive, loitering. You do not go forth to

> "Tell to others round,
> What a dear Saviour you have found."

There is the precious gospel; you do not go and put it to the lips of a sinner. There is the all-precious blood of Christ; you never go to tell the dying what they must do to be saved. The world is perishing with worse than plague: and you are idle! And you are a minister of the gospel; and you have taken that holy office upon yourself; and you are content to preach twice on a Sunday, and once on a week-day, and there is no remonstrance within you. You never desire to attract the multitudes to hear you preach; you had rather keep your empty benches, and study propriety, than you would once, at the risk of appearing over-zealous, draw the multitude and preach the word to them. You are a writer; you have great power in writing; you devote your

talents alone to light literature, or to the production of other things which may furnish amusement, but which can not benefit the soul. You know the truth, but you do not tell it out. Yonder mother is a converted woman: you have children, and you forget to instruct them in the way to heaven. You, yonder, are a young man, having nothing to do on the Sabbath-day, and there is the Sunday school; you do not go to tell those children the sovereign remedy that God has provided for the cure of sick souls. The death-bell is ringing e'en now; hell is crying out, howling with hunger for the souls of men. "Bring out the sinner! Bring out the sinner! Bring out the sinner! Let him die and be damned!" And there are you, professing to be a Christian, and doing nothing which might make you the instrument of saving souls—never putting out your hand to be the means in the hand of the Lord, of plucking sinners as brands from the burning! Oh! May the blessing of God rest on you, to turn you from such an evil way, that you may not sleep as do others, but may watch and be sober. The world's eminent danger demands that we should be active and not be slumbering.

Hark how the mast creaks! See the sails there, rent to ribbons. Breakers ahead! She will be on the rocks directly. Where is the captain? Where is the boatswain? Where are the sailors? Ahoy there! Where are you? Here's a storm come on. Where are you? You are down in the cabin. And there is the captain in a soft sweet slumber. There is the man at the wheel, as sound asleep as ever he can be; and there are all the sailors in their hammocks. What! and the breakers ahead? What! the lives of two hundred passengers in danger, and here are these brutes asleep? Kick them out. What is the good of letting such men as these be sailors, in such a time as this especially? Why, out with you! If you had gone to sleep in fine weather we might have forgiven you. Up with you, captain! What have you been at? Are you mad? But hark! the ship has struck; she will be down in a moment. Now you will work, will you? Now you will work, when it is of no use, and when the shrieks of drowning women shall toll you into hell for your most accursed negligence, in not

having taken care of them. Well, that is very much like a great many of us, in these times too.

This proud ship of our commonwealth is reeling in a storm of sin; the very mast of this great nation is creaking under the hurricane of vice that sweeps across the noble vessel; every timber is strained, and God help the good ship, or alas! none can save her. And who are her captain and her sailors, but ministers of God, the professors of religion? These are they to whom God gives grace to steer the ship. "Ye are the salt of the earth;" ye preserve and keep it alive, O children of God. Are ye asleep in the storm? Are ye slumbering now? If there were no dens of vice, if there were no harlots, if there were no houses of profanity, if there were no murders and no crimes, oh! ye that are the salt of the earth, ye might sleep; but to-day the sin of London crieth in the ears of God. This behemoth city is covered with crime, and God is vexed with her. And are we asleep, doing nothing? Then God forgive us! But sure of all the sins he ever doth forgive, this is the greatest, the sin of slumbering when a world is damning—the sin of being idle when Satan is busy, devouring the souls of men. "Brethren, let us not sleep" in such times as these; for if we do, a curse must fall upon us, horrible to bear.

There is a poor prisoner in a cell. His hair is all matted, over his eyes. A few weeks ago the judge put on the black cap, and commanded that he should be taken to the place from whence he came, and hung by the neck until dead. The poor wretch has his heart broken within him, whilst he thinks of the pinion, of the gallows, and of the drop, and of after-death. O! who can tell how his heart is rent and racked, whilst he thinks of leaving all, and going he knoweth not where! There is a man there, sound asleep upon a bed. He has been asleep there these two days, and under his pillow he has that prisoner's free pardon. I would horsewhip that scoundrel, horsewhip him soundly, for making that poor man have two days of extra misery. Why, if I had had that man's pardon, I would have been there, if I rode on the wings of lightning to get at him, and I should have thought the fastest train that ever run but slow, if I had so sweet a message to carry, and such a poor heavy heart to carry it to. But that

man, that brute, is sound asleep, with a free pardon under his pillow, whilst that poor wretch's heart is breaking with dismay! Ah! do not be too hard with him: he is here to-day. Side by side with you this morning there is sitting a poor penitent sinner; God has pardoned him, and intends that you should tell him that good news. He sat by your side last Sunday, and he wept all the sermon through, for he felt his guilt. If you had spoken to him then, who can tell? He might have had comfort; but there he is now—you do not tell him the good news. Do you leave that to me to do? Ah! sirs, but you can not serve God by proxy; what the minister does is nought to you; you have your own personal duty to do, and God has given you a precious promise. It is now on your heart. Will you not turn round to your next neighbor, and tell him that promise? O! there is many an aching heart that aches because of our idleness in telling the good news of this salvation. "Yes," says one of my members, who always comes to this place on a Sunday, and looks out for young men and young women whom he has seen in tears the Sunday before, and who brings many into the church, "yes, I could tell you a story." He looks a young man in the face, and says, "Hav'nt I seen you here a great many times?" "Yes." "I think you take a deep interest in the service, do you not?" "Yes, I do: what makes you ask me that question?" "Because I looked at your face last Sunday, and I thought there was something at work with you." "O! sir," he says, "nobody has spoken to me ever since I have been here till now, and I want to say a word to you. When I was at home with my mother, I used to think I had some idea of religion; but I came away, and was bound apprentice with an ungodly lot of youths, and have done everything I ought not to have done. And now, sir, I begin to weep, I begin to repent. I wish to God that I knew how I might be saved! I hear the word preached, sir, but I want something spoken personally to me by somebody." And he turns round; he takes him by the hand and says, "My dear young brother, I am so glad I spoke to you; it makes my poor old heart rejoice to think that the Lord is doing something here still. Now, do not be cast down; for you know, "This is a faithful say-

ing, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.'" The young man puts his handkerchief to his eyes, and after a minute, he says, "I wish you would let me call and see you, sir." "O! you may," he says. He talks with him, he leads him onward, and at last by God's grace the happy youth comes forward and declares what God has done for his soul, and owes his salvation as much to the humble instrumentality of the man that helped him as he could do to the preaching of the minister.

Beloved brethren, the bridegroom cometh! Awake! Awake! The earth must soon be dissolved, and the heavens must melt! Awake! Awake! O Holy Spirit arouse us all, and keep us awake.

III. And now I have no time for the last point, and therefore I shall not detain you. Suffice me to say in warning, there is AN EVIL HERE LAMENTED. There are some that are asleep, and the apostle mourns it.

My fellow sinner, thou that art this day unconverted, let me say six or seven sentences to thee, and thou shalt depart. Unconverted man! unconverted woman! you are asleep today, as they that sleep on the top of the mast in time of storm; you are asleep, as he that sleeps when the water-floods are out, and when his house is undermined, and being carried down the stream far out to sea; you are asleep, as he who in the upper chamber, when his house is burning and his own locks are singeing in the fire, knows not the devastation around him; you are asleep—asleep as he that lies upon the edge of a precipice, with death and destruction beneath him. One single start in his sleep would send him over, but he knows it not. Thou art asleep this day; and the place where thou sleepest has so frail a support that when once it breaks thou shalt fall into hell: and if thou wakest not till then, what a waking it will be! "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment;" and he cried for a drop of water, but it was denied him. "He that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ, and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." This is the gospel. Believe ye in Jesus, and ye shall "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

# SERMON XXI.

## THE LOVED ONES CHASTENED.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent"—REVELATION, iii. 19.

THE dealings of God towards the sons of men have always puzzled the wise men of the earth who have tried to understand them. Apart from the revelation of God the dealings of Jehovah towards his creatures in this world seem to be utterly inexplicable. Who can understand how it is that the wicked flourish and are in great power? The ungodly man flourishes like a green bay tree; behold, he stretcheth out his roots by the river: he knoweth not the year of drought; his leaf withereth not; and his fruit doth not fall in an untimely season. Lo, these are the ungodly that flourish in the world; they are filled with riches; they heap up gold like dust; they leave the rest of their substance to their babes; they add field to field, and acre to acre, and they become the princes of the earth. On the other hand, see how the righteous are cast down. How often is virtue dressed in the rags of poverty! How frequently is the most pious spirit made to suffer from hunger, and thirst, and nakedness! We have sometimes heard the Christian say, when he has contemplated these things, "Surely, I have served God in vain; it is for nothing that I have chastened myself every morning and vexed my soul with fasting; for lo, God hath cast me down, and he lifteth up the sinner. How can this be?" The sages of the heathen could not answer this question, and they therefore adopted the expedient of cutting the gordian knot. "We can not tell how it is," they might have said; therefore they flew at the fact itself, and denied it. "The man that prospers is favored of the gods; the man who is unsuccessful is obnox-

ious to the Most High." So said the heathen, and they knew no better. Those more enlightened easterns, who talked with Job in the days of his affliction, got but little further; for they believed that all who served God would have a hedge about them; God would multiply their wealth and increase their happiness; while they saw in Job's affliction, as they conceived, a certain sign that he was a hypocrite, and therefore God had quenched his candle and put out his light in darkness. And alas! even Christians have fallen into the same error. They have been apt to think, that if God lifts a man up there must be some excellence in him; and if he chastens and afflicts, they are generally led to think that it must be an exhibition of wrath. Now hear ye the text, and the riddle is all unriddled; listen ye to the words of Jesus, speaking to his servant John, and the mystery is all unmysteried. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

The fact is, that this world is not the place of punishment. There may now and then be eminent judgments; but as a rule God does not in the present state fully punish any man for sin. He allows the wicked to go on in their wickedness; he throws the reins upon their necks; he lets them go on unbridled in their lusts; some checks of conscience there may be; but these are rather as monitions than as punishments. And, on the other hand, he casts the Christian down; he gives the most afflictions to the most pious; perhaps he makes more waves of trouble roll over the breast of the most sanctified Christian than over the heart of any other man living So, then, we must remember that as this world is not the place of punishment, we are to expect punishment and reward in the world to come; and we must believe that the only reason, then, why God afflicts his people must be this:—

> "In love I correct thee, thy gold to refine,
> To make thee at length in my likeness to shine."

I shall try this morning to notice, first, *what it is in his children that God corrects;* secondly, *why God corrects them;*

and thirdly, *what is our comfort, when we are laboring under the rebukes and correctings of our God.* Our comfort must be the fact that he loves us even then. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."

I. First, then, beloved, WHAT IS IT IN THE CHRISTIAN THAT GOD REBUKES? One of the Articles of the Church of England saith right truly, that, naturally, "man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh, called in the Greek, *φρόνημα σαρκὸς*, which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire, of the flesh, is not subject to the Law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized, yet the Apostle doth confess, that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin," and because evil remains in the regenerate there is therefore a necessity that that evil should be upbraided. Ay, and a necessity that when that upbraiding is not sufficient, God should go to severer measures, and after having failed in his rebukes, adopt the expedient of chastening. "I rebuke and chasten." Hence God has provided means for the chastisement and the rebuking of his people. Sometimes God rebukes his children under the ministry. The minister of the gospel is not always to be a minister of consolation. The same Spirit that is the Comforter is he who convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and the same minister who is to be as the angel of God unto our souls, uttering sweet words that are full of honey, is to be at times the rod of God, the staff in the hand of the Almighty, with which to smite us on account of our transgressions. And ah! beloved, how often under the ministry ought we to have been checked when we were not? Perhaps the minister's words were very forcible, and they were uttered with true earnestness, and they applied to our case; but alas! we shut our ear to them, and applied them to our brother instead of to ourselves. I have often marveled

when I have been preaching. I have thought that I have described the cases of some of my most prominent members. I have marked in them diverse sins, and as Christ's faithful pastor, I have not shunned to picture their case in the pulpit, that they might receive a well-deserved rebuke; but I have marveled when I have spoken to them afterward, that they have thanked me for what I have said, because they thought it so applicable to such another brother in the church, whilst I had intended it wholly for them, and had, as I thought, so made the description accurate, and so brought it out in all its little points, that it must have been received by them. But alas! you know, my friends, that we sit under the sound of the Word, and we seldom think how much it belongs to us, especially if we hold an office in the Church. It is hard for a minister when he is hearing a brother minister preach, to think, it may be, he has a word of rebuke to me. If exalted to the office of elder or deacon, there groweth sometimes with that office a callousness to the Word when spoken to himself; and the man in office is apt to think of the hundreds of inquirers unto whom that may be found applicable, and of the multitudes of the babes in grace to whom such a word comes in season. Ay, friends, if we did but listen more to the rebukes of God in the ministry, if we hearkened more to his Word as he speaks to us every Sabbath day, we might be spared many corrections, for we are not corrected until we have despised rebukes, and after we have rejected those, then out comes the rod.

Sometimes, again, God rebukes his children *in their consciences*, without any visible means whatever. Ye that are the people of God will acknowledge that there are certain times, when, apparently without any instrumentality, your sins are brought to remembrance; your soul is cast down within you, and your spirit is sore vexed. God the Holy Spirit is himself making inquisition for sin; he is searching Jerusalem with candles; he is so punishing you because you are settled on your lees. If you look around you there is nothing that could cause your spirits to sink. The family are not sick; your business prospers; your body is in good

health; why then this sinking of spirit? You are not conscious at the time, perhaps, that you have committed any gross act of sin; still this dark depression continues, and at last you discover that you had been living in a sin which you did not know—some sin of ignorance, hidden and unperceived, and therefore God did withdraw from you the joy of his salvation, till you had searched your heart, and discovered wherein the evil lay. We have much reason to bless God that he does adopt this way sometimes of rebuking us before he chastens.

At other seasons, the rebuke is *quite indirect.* How often have I met rebuke, where it never was intended to be given! But God overruled the circumstance for good. Have you never been rebuked by a child? The innocent little prattler uttered something quite unwittingly, which cut you to your heart, and manifested your sin. You walked the street, mayhap, and you heard some man swear; and the thought perhaps struck your mind, "How little am I doing for the reclaiming of those who are abandoned!" And so, the very sight of sin accused you of negligence, and the very hearing of evil was made use of by God to convince you of another evil. Oh! if we kept our eyes open, there is not an ox in the meadow, nor a sparrow in the tree, which might not sometimes suggest a rebuke. There is not a star in midnight, there is not a ray in the noon-day, but what might suggest to us some evil that is hidden in our hearts, and lead us to investigate our inner man, if we were but awake to the soft whispers of Jehovah's rebukes. You know, our Saviour made use of little things to rebuke his disciples. He said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. Behold the fowls of the air, how they are fed!" So he made lilies and ravens speak to his disciples, to upbraid their discontent. Earth is full of monitors: all that we need, are ears to hear. However, when these rebukes all fail, God proceeds from rebuke to correction He will not always chide; but, if his rebukes are unheeded, then he grasps the rod, and he uses it. I need not tell you how it is that God uses the rod. My brethren, you have all been made to tingle with it. He has sometimes smitten you

in your persons, sometimes in your families, frequently in your estates, oftentimes in your prospects. He has smitten you in your nearest and dearest friend; or, worse still, it may be he has given you "a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet you." But you all understand, if you know anything of the life of a Christian, what the rod, and the staff, and the covenant are; and what it is to be corrected by God. Let me just particularize for a few minutes, and show what it is that God corrects in us.

Very frequently, God corrects *inordinate affection.* It is right of us to love our relatives—it is wrong of us to love them more than God. You, perhaps, are yourselves to-day guilty of this sin. At any rate, beloved, we may most of us look at home when we come to dwell on this point. Have we not some favored one—perhaps, the partner of our heart, or the offspring of our bosom, more dear to us than life itself? Have I not heard some man whose life is bound up in the life of the lad, his child?—some mother, whose soul is knit into the soul of her babe—some wife, some husband, to whom the loss of the partner would be the loss of life? Oh, there are many of us who are guilty of inordinate affection toward relations. Mark you, God will rebuke us for that. He will rebuke us in this way. Sometimes he will rebuke us by the minister; if that is not enough, he will rebuke us by sending sickness or disease to those very persons upon whom we have set our hearts; and if that rebuke us not, and if we are not zealous to repent, he will chasten us: the sickness shall yet be unto death. The disease shall break forth with more fearful violence, and the thing which we have made our idol shall be smitten, and shall become the food of worms. There never was an idol, that God either did not, or will not pull out of its place. "I am the Lord thy God; I am a jealous God;" and if we put any, however good and excellent their characters may be, and however deserving of our affection, upon God's throne, God will cry, "Down with it," and we shall have to weep many tears; but if we had not done so, we might have preserved the treasure, and have enjoyed it far better, without having lost it.

But other men are baser than this. One can easily overlook the fault of making too much of children, and wife, and friends, although very grievous in the sight of God; but alas! there are some that are too sordid to love flesh and blood; they love dirt, mere dirty earth, yellow gold. It is that on which they set their hearts. Their purse, they tell us, is dross; but when we come to take aught from it, we find they do not think it is so. "Oh," said a man once, "if you want a subscription from me, Sir, you must get at my heart, and then you will get at my purse." "Yes," said I, "I have no doubt I shall, for I believe that is where your purse lies, and I shall not be very far off from it." And how many there are who call themselves Christians, who make a god out of their wealth! Their park, their mansion, their estate, their warehouses, their large ledgers, their many clerks, their expanding business, or if not these, their opportunity to retire, their money in the Three per Cents. All these things are their idols and their gods; and we take them into our churches, and the world finds no fault with them. They are prudent men. You know many of them; they are very respectable people, they hold many respectable positions, and they are so prudent, only that the love of money, which is the root of all evil, is in their hearts too plainly to be denied. Every one may see it, though, perhaps, they see it not themselves. "Covetousness, which is idolatry," reigns very much in the church of the living God. Well, mark you, God will chasten for that. Whosoever loveth mammon among God's people, shall first be rebuked for it, as he is rebuked by me this day, and if that rebuke be not taken, there shall be a chastisement given. It may be, that the gold shall melt like the snow-flake before the sun; or if it be preserved, it shall be said, "Your gold and silver are cankered; the moth shall eat up your garments, and destroy your glory." Or else, the Lord will bring leanness into their souls, and cause them to go down to their graves with few honors on their heads, and with little comfort in their hearts; because they loved their gold more than their God, and valued earthly riches more than the riches that are eternal The Lord save us from that, or else he will surely correct us

But this is not the only sin: we are all subject to another crime which God abhors exceedingly. It is the sin of *pride.* If the Lord gives us a little comfort, we grow so big that we hardly know what to do with ourselves. Like Jeshurun of old, of whom it is said, "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked." Let us for a little time enjoy the full assurance of faith; self-conceit whispers, "You will retain the savor of that all your days;" and there is not quite a whisper, but something even fainter than that—"You have no need to depend upon the influence of the Holy Spirit now. See what a great man you have grown. You have become one of the Lord's most valued people; you are a Samson; you may pull down the very gates of hell and fear not. You have no need to cry, 'Lord, have mercy upon me.'" Or at other times, it takes a different turn. He gives us temporal mercies, and then we presumptuously say, "My mountain standeth firm; I shall never be moved." We meet with the poor saints, and we begin to hector over them, as if we were something, and they were nothing. We find some in trouble; we have no sympathy with them; we are bluff and blunt with them, as we talk with them about their troubles; yea, we are even savage and cruel with them. We meet with some who are in deep distress and faint-hearted; we begin to forget when we were faint-hearted too, and because they cannot run as fast as we can, we run far ahead, and turn back and look at them, call them sluggards, and say they are idle and lazy. And perhaps even in the pulpit, if we are preachers, we have got hard words to say against those who are not quite so advanced as we are. Well, mark, there never was a saint yet, that grew proud of his fine feathers, but what the Lord plucked them out by-and-by. There never yet was an angel that had pride in his heart, but he lost his wings, and fell into Gehenna, as Satan and those fallen angels did; and there shall never be a saint who indulges self-conceit, and pride, and self-confidence, but the Lord will spoil his glories, and trample his honors in the mire, and make him cry out yet again, "Lord, have mercy upon me," less than the least of all saints, and the "very chief of sinners."

Another sin that God rebukes, is *sloth*. Now I need not stop to picture that. How many of you are the finest specimens of sloth that can be discovered! I mean not in a business sense, for you are "not slothful in business;" but with regard to the things of God, and the cause of truth, why, nine out of ten of all the professors of religion, I do hazard the assertion, are as full of sloth as they can be Take our churches all around, and there is not a corporation in the world, however corrupt, that is less attentive to its professed interest, than the church of Christ. There certainly are many societies and establishments in the world that deserve much blame for not attending to those interests which they ought to promote; but I do think the Church of God is the hugest culprit of all. She says that she is the preacher of the gospel to the poor: does she preach it to them? Yes, here and there: now and then there is a spasmodic effort: but how many are there that have got tongues to speak, and ability to utter God's Word that are content to be still! She professes to be the educator of the ignorant, and she is so in a measure: there are many of you who have no business to be here this morning—you ought to have been teaching in the Sabbath-school, or instructing the young, and teaching others. Ye have no need of teachers just now; ye have learned the truth, and should have been teaching it to other people. The church professes that she is yet to cast the light of the gospel throughout the world. She does a little in missionary enterprise; but ah! how little! how little! how little compared with what her Master did for her and the claims of Jesus upon her! We are a lazy set. Take the church all round, we are as idle as we can be; and we need to have some whipping times of persecution, to whip a little more earnestness and zeal into us. We thank God this is not so much the case now, as it was even twelve months ago. We hope the church may progress in her zeal; for if not, she, as a whole, and each of us as members, will be first rebuked, and if we take not the rebuke, we shall afterwards be chastened for this our great sin.

I have no time to enter into all the other reasons for which God will rebuke and chasten. Suffice it to say that every sin

nas one twig in God's rod appropriated to itself. Suffice it to say, that in God's hand there are punishments for each particular transgression; and it is very singular to notice how in Bible history almost every saint has been chastened for the sin he has committed by the sin itself falling upon his own head. Transgression has been first a pleasure, and afterward it has been a scourge. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways," and that is the severest punishment in all the world.

Thus I have tried to open the first head—*it is that God rebukes and chastens.*

II. Now, secondly, WHY DOES GOD REBUKE AND CHASTEN? "Why," says one, "God rebukes his children because they are his children; and he chastens them because they are his children." Well, I will not go the length of saying that is false, but I will go the length of saying it is not true. If any one should say to a father, after he had chastened his child, "Why is it you have chastened the child?" he would not say, it is because I am his father. It is true in one sense; but he would say, "I have chastened the child because he has done wrong." Because the proximate reason why he had chastened his child would not be that he was his father, though that would have something to do with it as a primary reason; but the absolute and primary cause would be, "I have chastened him because he has done wrong, because I wish to correct him for it, that he might not do so again." Now, God, when he chastens his children, never does it absolutely; because he is his father; but he does it for a wise reason. He has some other reason besides his fatherhood. At the same time, one reason why God afflicts his children and not others, is because he is their Father. If you were to go home to-day and see a dozen boys in the streets throwing stones and breaking windows it is very likely you would start the whole lot of them; but if there is one boy that would get a sweet knock on the head it would be your own; for you would say, "What are you at, John? What business have you here?" You might not be justified, perhaps, in meddling with the others—you would let their own fathers attend to them; but because you

were his father, you would try to make him remember it. Certain special chastisements are inflicted on God's children, because they are his children; but it is not because they are his children that he chastens them at any one time, but because they have been doing something wrong. Now, if you are under chastisement, let this truth be certain to you. Are the consolations of God small with thee? Is there any secret thing with thee? Art thou chastened in thy business? Then what sin hast thou committed? Art thou cast down in thy spirit? Then what transgression has brought this on thee? Remember, it is not fair to say, "I am chastened because I am his child;" the right way to say it is, "I am his child, and therefore when he chastens me he has a reason for it." Now, what is it? I will help you to judge.

Sometimes God chastens and afflicts us, *to prevent sin.* He sees that the embryo of lust is in our hearts; he sees that that little egg of mischief is beginning to hatch and to produce sin, and he comes and crushes it at once—nips the sin in the bud. Ah! we can not tell how much guilt Christians have been saved from by their afflictions. We are running on madly to our destruction, and then some dark apparition of trouble comes, and stretches itself across the way, and in great fright we fly back astonished. We ask, why this trouble? Oh! if we knew the danger into which we were rushing we should only say, "Lord, I thank thee that by that direful trouble thou didst save me from a sin, that would have been far more troublous and infinitely more dangerous."

At other times God chastens us for sins already committed. We perhaps have forgotten them; but God has not. I think that sometimes years elapse between a sin and the chastisement for it. The sins of our youth may be punished in our gray old age; the transgression you did twenty years ago, those of you who have grown old, may this very day be found in your bones. God chastens his children, but he sometimes lays the rod by. The time would not be seasonable perhaps; they are not strong enough to bear it: so he lays the rod by and he says, as surely as he is my child, though I lay the rod by, I will make him smart for it, that I may at last deliver him

from his sin, and make him like unto myself. But mark, ye people of God, in all these chastisments for sin there is no punishment. When God chastises you he does not punish as a judge does, but he chastens as a father. When he lays the rod on, with many blows and smart ones, there is not one thought of anger in his heart—there is not one look of displeasure in his eye; he means it all for your good; his heaviest blows are as much tokens of his affection as his sweetest caresses. He has no motive but your profit and his own glory. Be of good cheer, then, if these be the reasons. But take care that thou dost fulfil the command—"Be zealous, therefore, and repent."

I read in an old Puritan author the other day a very pretty figure. He says, "A full wind is not so favorable to a ship when it is fully fair as a side wind. It is strange," says he, "that when the wind blows in an exact direction to blow a ship into port, she will not go near so well as if she had a cross wind sideways upon her." And he explains it thus: "The mariners say that when the wind blows exactly fair it only fills a part of the sails, and it can not reach the sails that are ahead, because the sail, bellying out with the wind, prevents the wind from reaching that which is further ahead. But when the wind sweeps sideways, then every sail is full, and she is driven on swiftly in her course with the full force of the wind. Ah!" says the old Puritan, "there is nothing like a side wind to drive God's people to heaven. A fair wind only fills a part of their sails; that is, fills their joy, fills their delight; but," says he, "the side wind fills them all; it fills their caution, fills their prayerfulness, fills every part of the spiritual man, and so the ship speeds onward toward its haven." It is with this design that God sends affliction, to chasten us on account of our transgressions.

III. And now I am to conclude by noting WHAT IS OUR COMFORT WHEN GOD REBUKES AND CHASTENS US?

Our great comfort is, that he *loves* us still. Oh! what a precious thing faith is, when we are enabled to believe our God, and how easy then it is to endure and to surmount all trouble. Hear the old man in the garret, with a crust of bread and a

cup of cold water. Sickness has confined him these years within that narrow room. He is too poor to maintain an attendant. Some woman comes in to look to him in the morning and in the evening, and there he sits, in the depths of poverty. And you will suppose he sits and groans. No, brethren; he may sometimes groan when the body is weak, but usually he sits and sings; and when the visitor climbs the creaking staircase of that old house, where human beings scarcely ought to be allowed to live; and when he goes into that poor cramped up room that is more fit to accommodate swine than men, he sits down upon that bottomless chair, and when he has seated himself as well as he can upon the four cross pieces of it he begins to talk to him, and he finds him full of heaven. "Oh! sir," he says, "my God is very kind to me." Propped up he is with pillows, and full of pain in every member of his body, but he says, "Blessed be his name, he has not left me. Oh! sir, I have enjoyed more peace and happiness in this room, out of which I have not gone for years,"—(the case is real that I am now describing) "I have enjoyed more happiness here than I ever did in all my life. My pains are great, sir, but they will not be for long; I am going home soon." Ay, were he more troubled still, had he such rich consolation poured into his heart, he might endure all with a smile and sing in the furnace. Now, child of God, thou art to do the same. Remember, all thou hast to suffer is sent in love. It is hard work for a child, when his father has been chastening it, to look at the rod as a picture of love. You can not make your children do that: but when they grow up to be men and women how thankful they are to you then! "O father," says the son, "I know now why it was I was so often chastened; I had a proud hot spirit; it would have been the ruin of me if thou hadst not whipped it out of me. Now, I thank thee, my father, for it."

So, while we are here below we are nothing but little children; we can not prize the rod: when we come of age, and we go into our estates in Paradise, we shall look back upon the rod of the Covenant as being better than Aaron's rod, for it blossoms with mercy. We shall say to it, "Thou art the

most wondrous thing in all the list of my treasures. Lord, I thank thee that thou didst not leave me unafflicted, or else I had not been where I am, and what I am, a child of God in Paradise." "I have this week," says one, "sustained so serious a loss in my business, that I am afraid I shall be utterly broken up." There is love in that. "I came here this morning," says one, "and I left a dead child in the house—dear to my heart." There is love in that. That coffin and that shroud will both be full of love; and when your child is taken away, it shall not be in anger. "Ah!" cries another, "but I have been exceedingly sick, and even now I feel I ought not to have ventured out; I must return to my bed." Ah! he makes your bed in your affliction. There is love in every pain, in every twitch of the nerve; in every pang that shoots through the members, there is love. "Ah!" says one, "it is not myself, but I have got a dear one that is sick." There is love there, too. Do what God may, he can not do an unloving act toward his people. O Lord! thou art Omnipotent; thou canst do all things; but thou canst not lie, and thou canst not be unkind to thine elect. No, Omnipotence may build a thousand worlds, and fill them with bounties; Omnipotence may powder mountains into dust, and burn the sea, and consume the sky, but Omnipotence can not do an unloving thing toward a believer. Oh! rest quite sure, Christian, a hard thing, an unloving thing from God toward one of his own people is quite impossible. He is kind to you when he casts you into prison as when he takes you into a palace; He is as good when he sends famine into your house as when he fills your barns with plenty. The only question is, Art thou his child? If so, he hath rebuked thee in affection, and there is love in his chastisement.

I have now done, but not until I have made my last appeal I have now to turn from God's people to the rest of you. Ah! my hearers, there are some of you that have no God; you have no Christ on whom to cast your troubles. I see some of you to-day dressed in the habiliments of mourning; I suppose you have lost some one dear unto you. Oh! ye that are robed in black, is God your God? Or are you mourning

now, without God to wipe every tear from your eye? I know that many of you are struggling now in your business with very sharp and hard times. Can you tell your troubles to Jesus, or have you to bear them all yourself—friendless and helpless? Many men have been driven mad, because they had no one to whom to communicate their sorrow; and how many others had been driven worse than mad, because when they told their sorrows their confidence was betrayed. O poor mourning spirit, if thou hadst, as thou mightest have done, gone and told him all thy woes, he would not have laughed at thee, and he would never have told it out again. Oh I remember when once my young heart ached in boyhood, when I first loved the Saviour. I was far away from father and mother, and all I loved, and I thought my soul would burst; for I was an usher in a school, in a place where I could meet with no sympathy or help. Well, I went to my chamber, and told my little griefs into the ears of Jesus. They were great griefs to me then, though they are nothing now. When I just whispered them on my knees into the ear of him who had loved me with an everlasting love, oh! it was so sweet, none can tell. If I had told them to somebody else, they would have told them again; but he, my blessed confidant, he knows my secrets, and he never tells them. Oh! what can you do that have got no Jesus to tell your troubles to? And the worst of it is, you have got more troubles to come. Times may be hard now, but they will be harder one day—they will be harder when they come to an end. They say it is hard to live, but it is very hard to die. When one comes to die and has Jesus with him, even then dying is hard work; but to die without a Saviour! Oh! my friends, are you inclined to risk it? Will you face the grim monarch, and no Saviour with you? Remember, you must do it; you must die soon. The chamber shall soon be hushed in silence no sound shall be heard except the babbling watch that ever tells the flight of time. The physician shall "Hush!" and hold up his finger, and whisper in a suppressed voice, "He can not last many minutes longer." And the wife and the children, or the father and the mother, will stand around your

bed and look at you, as I have looked at some, with a sad, sad heart. They will look at you a little while, till at last the death-change will pass o'er your face. "He is gone!" it shall be said; and the hand uplifted shall be dropped down again, and the eye shall be glazed in darkness, and then the mother will turn away and say, "O my child, I could have borne all this if there had been hope in thine end!" And when the minister comes in to comfort the family, he will ask the question of the father, "Do you think your son had an interest in the blood of Christ?" The reply will be, "O sir, we must not judge, but I never saw anything like it; I never had any reason to hope: that is my greatest sorrow." There, there! I could bury every friend without a tear, compared with the burial of an ungodly friend. Oh! it seems such an awful thing, to have one allied to you by ties of blood, dead and in hell.

We generally speak very softly about the dead. We say, "Well, we hope." Sometimes we tell great lies, for we know we do not hope at all. We wish it may be so, but we can not hope it; we never saw any grounds that should lead us to hope. But would it not be an awful thing if we were honest enough to look the dread reality in its face—if the husband were simply to look at it, and say, "There was my wife; she was an ungodly, careless woman. I know at least, she never said anything concerning repentance and faith; and if she died so, and I have every reason to fear she did, then she is cast away from God." It would be unkind to say it; but it is only honest for us to know it—to look dread truth in the face. Oh! my fellow-men and brethren! oh! ye that are partners with me of an immortal life! We shall one day meet again before the throne of God; but ere that time comes, we shall each of us be separated, and go our divers ways down the shelving banks of the river of death. My fellow-man, art thou prepared to die alone? I ask thee this question again—Art thou prepared to arise in the day of judgment without a Saviour? Art thou willing to run all risks and face thy Maker, when he comes to judge thee, without an advocate to plead thy cause? Art thou prepared to hear him say, "De-

part ye cursed!" Are ye ready now to endure the everlasting ire of him who smites, and smiting once, doth smite forever? Oh! if ye will make your bed in hell, if you are prepared to be damned, if you are willing to be so, then live in sin and indulge in pleasures;—you will get your wish. But if ye would not; if ye would enter heaven, and ye would be saved, "Turn thee, turn thee, why will ye die, O house of Israel?" May God the Holy Spirit, enable you to repent of sin and to believe on Jesus; and then you shall have a portion among them that are sanctified: but unrepenting and unbelieving, if ye die so, ye must be driven from his presence, never to have life, and joy, and liberty, as long as eternity shall last.

The Lord prevent this, for Jesus' sake.

# SERMON XXII.

## FEAR NOT.

"Fear not, thou worm Jacob, *and* ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer the Holy One of Israel."—ISAIAH, xli. 14

I SHALL speak this morning to those that are discouraged, depressed in spirit, and sore troubled in the Christian life. There are certain nights of exceeding great darkness, through which the spirit has to grope in much pain and misery, and during which much of the comfort of the Word is particularly needed. Those seasons occur in this manner. Frequently they occur at the outset of a religious life. A young man, deeply impressed under the ministry, has been led to feel the weight of sin; he trusts also he has been led to look for salvation to the Christ who is preached in the gospel. In the young ardor of his spirit he devotes himself wholly to Christ; with the most solemn vows he dedicates body, soul, time, talents, all that he has, to the great work of serving God; he thinks it easy to fulfill his vow; he doth not count the cost; he reckons it will be easy to forsake gay companions, to renounce old established habits, and to become a Christian. Alas! before many days he finds out his mistake, if he did not reckon without his host he certainly reckoned without his heart, for his evil heart of unbelief had deceived him, he knew not how hard would be the struggle, and how desperate the wrestling between his old evil nature and the new-born principle of grace within him. He finds it to be like the rending off of right arms to give up old and cherished habits; he discovers it to be painful to renounce his former pursuits, as painful as it would be to pluck out his right eye. He sits down then, and he says, "If this be the trouble at the outset what may I expect as I proceed. O my soul, thou wast

too fast in dedicating thyself to God; thou hast undertaken a warfare which thy prowess can never accomplish; thou hast started on a journey for which thy strength is not adequate; let me again return unto the world;" and if the Spirit saith, "Nay, thou canst not," then the poor soul sits itself down in deep misery, and cries, "I can not go back and I can not g forward; what must I do? I am exceedingly discouraged be cause of the way." The same feeling often overcomes the most valiant Christian veteran. He who has been long experienced in the things of the divine life will sometimes be overtaken with a dark night and a stormy tempest; so dark will be the night, that he will not know his right hand from his left, and so horrible the tempest, that he can not hear the sweet words of his Master, saying, "Fear not, I am with thee." Periodical tornadoes and hurricanes will sweep o'er the Christian; he will be subjected to as many trials in his spirit as trials in his flesh. This much I know, if it be not so with all of you it is so with me. I have to speak to-day to myself; and whilst I shall be endeavoring to encourage those who are distressed and down-hearted, I shall be preaching, I trust to myself, for I need something which shall cheer my heart—why I can not tell, wherefore I do not know, but I have a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me; my soul is cast down within me, I feel as if I had rather die than live; all that God hath done by me seems to be forgotten, and my spirit flags and my courage breaks down with the thought of that which is to come. I need your prayers; I need God's Holy Spirit; and I felt that I could not preach to-day, unless I should preach in such a way as to encourage you and to encourage myself in the good work and labor of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What a precious promise to the young Christian, or to the old Christian attacked by lowness of spirits and distress of mind! "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer the Holy One of Israel." Christian brethren, there are some in this congregation, I hope many, who have solemnly devoted themselves to the cause and service of the Lord Jesus Christ: let

them hear, then, the preparation which is necessary for this service set forth in the word of our text. First, *before we can do any great things for Christ there must be a sense of weakness:* "Worm Jacob." Secondly, *there must be trust in promised strength;* and thirdly, *there must be fear removed by that promise:* "Fear not, for I will help thee."

I. In the first place, the first qualification for serving God with any amount of success, and for doing God's work well and triumphantly, is A SENSE OF OUR OWN WEAKNESS. When God's warrior marches forth to battle with plumed helmet, and with mail about his loins, strong in his own majesty—when he says, "I know that I shall conquer, my own right arm and my mighty sword shall get unto me the victory," defeat is not far distant. God will not go forth with that man who goeth forth in his own strength. He who reckoneth on victory having first calculated his own might, has reckoned wrongly, for "it is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." They that go forth to fight, boasting that they can do it, shall return with their banners trailed in the dust, and with their armor stained with defeat; for God will not go forth with the man who goeth forth in his own strength. God hath said it; men must serve him, they must serve him in his own way, and they must serve him in his own strength too, or he will never accept their service. That which man doth, unaided by divine strength, God never can accept. The mere fruits of the earth he casteth away; he will only have that, the seed of which was sown from heaven, sprinkled in the heart, and harvested by the sun of grace. There must be a consciousness of weakness, before there can be any victory.

I think I hear many saying to-day, "Well, sir, if that be a qualification for doing much, I have it to a very large extent." Well, do not marvel, do not wonder. Depend on this: God will empty out all that thou hast before he will ever put his own into thee; he will first empty out all thy granaries, before he will fill them with the finest of the wheat. The river of God is full of water; but there is not one drop of it that takes its rise in earthly springs. God will have no strength used in

his own battles but the strength which he himself imparts, and I would not have you that are now distressed in the least discouraged by it. Your emptiness is but the preparation for your being filled, and your casting down is but the making ready for your lifting up.

Are there others of you that would almost desire to be cast down that they might be prepared to serve God? Let me tell you, then, how you can promote in yourself a sense of your own nothingness. The text addresses us as worms. Now, the mere rationalist, the man who boasts of the dignity of human nature, will never subscribe his name to such a title as this. "Worm," says he, "I am no worm: I am a man; a man is the most glorious thing that God has made; I am not going to be called a worm; I am a man—I can do anything; I want not your revelations; they may be fit for children, for men of childish minds that only learn by believing: I am a man: I can think out truth; I will make my own Bible, fashion my own ladder, and mount on it to heaven, if there be a heaven, or make a heaven, if that be all, and dwell in it myself." Not so, however, he who is wise and understandeth; he knows that he is a worm, and he knows it in this way:

First, he knows it by *contemplation*. He that thinks, will always think himself little. Men who have no brains are always great men; but those who think, must think their pride down—if God is with them in their thinking. Lift up now your eyes, behold the heavens, the work of God's fingers; behold the sun guided in his daily march; go ye forth at midnight, and behold the heavens; consider the stars and the moon; look ye upon these works of God's hands, and if ye be men of sense, and your souls are attuned to the high music of the spheres, ye will say, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" My God! when I survey the boundless fields of ether, and see those ponderous orbs rolling therein—when I consider how vast are thy dominions—so wide that an angel's wing might flap to all eternity and never reach a boundary—I marvel that thou shouldst look on insects so obscure as man. I have taken to myself the microscope and seen the ephemera upon the

leaf, and I have called him small. I will not call him so again; compared with me he is great, if I put myself in comparison with God. I am so little that I shrink into nothingness when I behold the Almightiness of Jehovah—so little, that the difference between the animalculæ and man dwindles into nothing, when compared with the infinite chasm between God and man. Let your mind rove upon the great doctrines of the Godhead; consider the existence of God from before the foundations of the world; behold Him who is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty; let your soul comprehend as much as it can of the Infinite, and grasp as much as possible of the Eternal, and I am sure if you have minds at all, they will shrink with awe. The tall archangel bows himself before his Master's throne, and we shall cast ourselves into the lowest dust when we feel what base nothings, what insignificant specks we are when compared with our all-adorable Creator. Labor, O soul, to know thy nothingness, and learn it *by contemplating God's greatness.*

Again, if you want to know your own nothingness, consider *what you are in suffering.* I was thinking, the other evening, how small a matter it must be with God to cast any man into the most unutterable agony. We are well and in good spirits; we know not why, but it seems as if God's finger had touched one nerve, but one poor nerve, and we are so miserable that we could sit down and weep; we do not know how to bear ourselves. But half an hour ago we could have "smiled at Satan's rage, and faced a frowning world;" and God does but put his hand on our hearts, and just let one of the strings run loose, and what discord there is in our spirits; we are annoyed at the slightest matter; we wish to be continually alone; the very promises yield us no comfort; our days are nights, and our nights are black as Gehenna. We know not how to endure ourselves. How easily, then, can God cast us into misery! O man, what a little thing thou art, if so little a thing can overthrow thee. Ye have heard men talk big words when they have been prosperous; did you ever hear them talk so when they were in deep distress, and great anguish and sorrow? No, then they say, "Am I a seal or a

whale, that thou settest a watch upon me? What am I, that thou shouldst visit me every morning, and chasten me every night? Let me alone, until I swallow down my spittle. Why am I sore vexed? What am I, that thou shouldst make me a butt for thine arrows, and a target for thy wrath? Spare me, O my God, for I am less than nothing; I am but a shadow that passeth away and declineth. Oh deal not hardly with thy servant, for thy mercies' sake." Great sorrow will always make a man think little of himself, if God blesseth it to him.

Again: if you would know your own weakness, *try some great labor for Christ.* I can understand how some minister who preaches to his hundred-and-fifty on a Sabbath-day, and regards himself as having a large congregation, should be very precise about the color of his cravat, and about the respect that is paid to his dignity in his little church; I can well comprehend how he should be as big as my Lord Archbishop—because he does nothing; he has nothing at all to try him; but I can not imagine Martin Luther standing before the Diet at Worms, being proud because he had to do such a deed as that. I can not conceive John Calvin, in his incessant labors for Christ, leading on the reformation, and teaching the truth of God with power, saying to himself, "Lo! this great Babylon that I have builded." I can suppose the man that has nothing to do and that is doing nothing, sitting down in devout complacency with his own adorable self; but I can not conceive, if you nerve yourselves to great labors, but what you will have to say, "Lord, what a worm am I that thou shouldst call me to such work as this!" Turn, if you please, to the history of all men who have done great deeds for God, and you will find them saying, "I marvel that God should use me thus!" "This day my mind was exceedingly cast down," says one of them, "for God had called me to a great labor, and I never felt so much of my own insufficiency as I did to-day." Says another, "I have to-morrow to do such-and-such an eminent service for my Master, and I can say that when I was in my low estate, I was often exalted above measure, but this day my God has cast me into the lowest depths at the recollection of the work for which he has

engaged me." Go and do something, some of you, and I will be bound to say it will be the means of pricking that fair bubble of your pride, and letting some of it blow away. If you would understand what is meant by being a worm, go and do what the 15th verse says the worm should do—go and thrash the mountains, and beat them small; make the hills as chaff fanned by the wind, scatter them, and then rejoice in God: and if you can do that,

> "The more God's glories strike your eyes,
> The humbler you will lie."

*Devout contemplation*, *sharp suffering*, *hard labor*—all these will teach us what little creatures we are. Oh! may God by all means and every means keep us, well understanding and knowing that we are nothing more and nothing better than worms!

How easy it is, my brethren, for you and I to fly up! How hard to keep down! That demon of pride was born with us, and it will not die one hour before us. It is so woven into the very warp and woof of our nature, that till we are wrapped in our winding-sheets we shall never hear the last of it. If any man telleth me that he is humble, I know him to be profoundly proud; and if any man will not acknowledge this truth, that he is desperately inclined to self-exaltation, let him know that his denial of this truth is the best proof of it. Do you know what is the sweetest flattery in all the world? It is that flattery that Cæsar's courtiers of old gave to him, when they said Cæsar hated flattery, being then most highly flattered. We do not hate flattery, any one of us; we all like it. We do not like it if it is labeled flattery; but we like it if it is given in a little underhand fashion. We all love praise.

> "The proud to gain it toils on toils endure,
> The modest shun it, but to make it sure."

We all love it, every soul of us, and it is right and meet that we should all bow before God, and acknowledge that pride

which is woven into our nature, and ask him to teach us what little things we are, that we may claim this promise—"Fear not, thou worm Jacob."

II. Now the next point. Before devoting ourselves to Christ, or doing any great labor for the Saviour, it is necessary THERE SHOULD BE TRUST IN THE PROMISED STRENGTH. "I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." It is a certain fact, that though men be worms, they do what worms never could do; although men be nothing they do accomplish deeds which need even the power of the Infinite to rival them. How shall we account for this? Certainly it is not the worms; it must be some secret energy which gives them might. The mystery is unravelled in the text. "I will help thee, saith the LORD." In ancient history there is a story told of a valiant captain whose banner was always foremost in the fight, whose sword was dreaded by his enemies, for it was the herald of slaughter and of victory. His monarch once demanded of him that he should send this potent sword to him to be examined. The monarch took the sword, quietly criticised it, and sent it back with this message—"I see nothing wonderful in the sword; I can not understand why any man should be afraid of it." The captain sent back in the most respectful manner a message of this kind: "Your Majesty has been pleased to examine the sword, but I did not send the arm that wielded it; if you had examined that, and the heart that guided the arm, you would have understood the mystery." And now we look at men, and see what men have done, and we say, "I can not understand this; how was it done?" "Why, we are only seeing the sword; if we could see the heart of infinite love that guided that man in his onward course, we should not wonder that he, as God's sword, gained the victory. Now, the Christian may remember, that little though he be, God is with him; God will help him, and that right early. Brethren, I like a man who, when he begins to do anything, is afraid of himself, and says, "It is of no use; I can not do it." Let him alone: he will do it. He is all right. The man who says, "Oh there is nothing in it, I can do it," will break

down to a dead certainty. But let him begin, by saying, "I know what I am at, and I feel confident I can not do it unless I have something more given to me than I feel to-day;" that man will come back with flying banners, the trumpets proclaiming that he has been victorious. But it must be because he puts reliance upon help promised. Now, Christian, I see you this morning ready to run away from the battle; you have been so dispirited this last week, through divers adverse circumstances, that you are ready to give up your religion. Now, man, here is a brother comrade that is passing through just the same; he comes here this morning, half inclined to run off to Tarshish, like Jonah did of old, only he could not find a boat, or else he might have sailed away; and he has come here to pat you on the shoulder and say, "Brother, do not let you and I play deserters, after all; let us up to arms, and still fight for our Master; for the promise says, "I will help thee." Brother, what an all-sufficient promise that is—"*I* will help thee." Why, it matters not what God has given us to do; if he helps us we can do it. Give me God to help me, and I will split the world in halves, and shiver it till it shall be smaller than the dust of the threshing floor; ay, and if God be with me, this breath could blow whole worlds about, as the child bloweth a bubble. There is no saying what man can do when God is with him. Give God to a man, and he can do all things. Put God into a man's arm, and he may have only the jawbone of an ass to fight with, but he will lay the Philistines in heaps: put God into a man's hand, and he may have a giant to deal with, and nothing but a sling and a stone; but he will lodge the stone in the giant's brow before long; put God into a man's eye, and he will flash defiance on kings and princes; put God into a man's lip, and he will speak right honestly, though his death should be the wages of his speech. There is no fear of a man who has got God with him; he is all-sufficient; there is nothing beyond his power. And my brethren, what an opportune help God's is! God's help always comes in at the right time.

We are often making a fuss because God does not help us when we do not want to be helped. "O!" says one, "I do

not think that I could die for Christ; I feel I could not; I wish I felt that I had strength enough to die." Well, you just won't feel that, because you are not going to die, and God will not give you strength to die with, to lay up till the dying time comes. Wait till ye are dying, and then he will give you strength to die. "O!" says another, "I wish I felt as strong in prayer as so-and-so." But you do not want so much strength in prayer, and you shall not have it. You shall have what you want, and you shall have it when you want it; but you shall not have it before. Ah, I have often cried to God and desired that I might feel happy before I began to preach—that I might feel I could preach to the people. I could never get it at all. And yet sometimes God hath been pleased to cheer me as I have gone along, and given me strength that has been equal to my day. So it must be with you. God will come in when you want him—not one minute before, nor yet one minute later. "I will help thee." I will help thee when thou needest help! And oh! brethren, what an ennobling thing it is to be helped by God! To be helped by a fellow man is no disgrace, but it is no honor; but to be helped by God, what an honor that is! When the Christian prophet preacheth his Master's word, and feels that he has girded about his loins the belt of the Almighty, to strengthen him for his day's work, that he may not fear the people, what a noble being he is then! When the Christian philanthropist goes into the prison, in the midst of reeking disease and death, and feels that God has put the wing of the angel over him, to shield him in the day of pestilence, how it ennobles and honors him to have God with him! To have his strength girding his loins and nerving his arm, is just the highest thing to which man can attain. I thought but yesterday, "O, if I were a cherub I would stand with wings outstretched, and I would bless God for opportunities for serving him;" but I thought within myself, "I have an opportunity of serving God, but I am too weak for it. O my God, I wish thou hadst not put the load on me." And then it struck me, "Do the cherubim and seraphim ever say that?" Do they ever for a moment say, 'I have not strength enough to do it!'" No, if a cherub

had a work to do which was beyond his might, he would meekly bow his head and say, "My Lord; I fly, I fly! He that commanded the deed will enable me to perform it." And so must the Christian say; "My God, dost thou command? It is enough: 'tis done. Thou never didst send us to a warfare at our own charges, and thou wilt never do so; thou wilt help us, and be with us to the end."

Before we can do much, then, we must *know our own weakness; and believe God's strength.*

III. And now comes the last point, upon which I shall be brief. We must, then, LABOR TO GET RID, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, OF FEAR. The prophet says, "Fear not;" thou art a worm, but do not fear; God will help thee; why shouldst thou fear? Let us labor to get rid of fear, when we are not certain we are serving our Master. And let these be our reasons:

Get rid of fear, *because fear is painful.* How it torments the spirit! When the Christian trusts, he is happy; when he doubts, he is miserable. When the believer looks to his Master and relies upon him, he can sing; when he doubts his Master, he can only groan. What miserable wretches the most faithful Christians are when they once begin doubting and fearing! It is a trade I never like to meddle with, because it never pays the expenses, and never brings in any profit —the trade of doubting. Why, the soul is broken in pieces, lanced, pricked with knives, dissolved, racked, pained. It knoweth not how to exist when it gives way to fear. Up, Christian! thou art of a sorrowful countenance; up, and chase thy fears. Why wouldst thou be for ever groaning in thy dungeon? Why should the Giant Despair for ever beat thee with his crabtree cudgel? Up! drive him away! touch the key of the promises; be of good cheer! Fear never helped thee yet, and it never will.

Fear, too, is *weakening.* Make a man afraid—he will run at his own shadow; make a man brave, and he will stand before an army and overcome them. He will never do much good in the world who is afraid of men. The fear of God bringeth blessings, but the fear of men bringeth a snare, and

such a snare that many feet have been tripped by it. No man shall be faithful to God, if he is fearful of man; no man shall find his arm sufficient for him, and his might equal to his emergencies unless he can confidently believe, and quietly wait. We must not fear; for fear is weakening.

Again; we must not fear; for fear *dishonors God.* Doubt the Eternal, distrust the Omnipotent? O, traitorous fear! thinkest thou that the arm which piled the heavens, and sustains the pillars of the earth shall ever be palsied? Shall the brow which eternal ages have rolled over without scathing it, at last be furrowed by old age? What! shall the Eternal fail thee? Shall the faithful Promiser break his oath? Thou dishonorest God, O unbelief! Get thee hence! God is too wise to err, too good to be unkind; leave off doubting him, and begin to trust him, for in so doing, thou wilt put a crown on his head, but in doubting him thou dost trample his crown beneath thy feet.

And lastly, doubt not the Lord, O Christian; for in so doing *thou dost lower thyself.* The more thou believest, the greater thou art; but the more thou doubtest, the less thou becomest. It was said of the world's conqueror, that when he was sick, he puled like a child. "Give me some drink," cried one, like a sick girl, it was said to his dishonor. And is it not to the dishonor of a Christian, who lives in secret on his God, and professes to trust alone in him, that he can not trust him; that a little child will overcome his faith? O, poor cockle-shell boat, that is upset by a rain-drop! O poor puny Christian that is overcome by every straw, that stumbles at every stone! Then, Christian men, behave like men! It is childish to doubt; it is manhood's glory to trust. Plant your foot upon the immoveable Rock of Ages; lift your eye to heaven; scorn the world; never play craven; bend your fist in the world's face, and bid defiance to it and hell, and you are a man, and noble. But crouch, and cringe, and dread, and doubt, and you have lost your Christian dignity and are no longer what you should be. You do not honor God. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob; I will help thee, saith the LORD." Then why shouldst thou fear?"

I feel that my voice fails me, and with it my very powers of thought too, and therefore I can only turn to my comrades in arms, in the good war of Christ, and I say to them, brethren, you and I can do nothing of ourselves; we are poor puny things; but let us attempt great things, for God is with us; let us dare great things, for God will not leave us. Remember what he has done aforetime; and remember what he has done of old he will do again. Remember David the shepherd-boy. Think ye well of Shamgar, with his ox-goad. Forget ye not the jawbone of the ass, and the stone from the sling. If these worked wonders, why should not we? If little things have done great things, let us try to do great things also. You know not, ye atoms, but that your destiny is sublime. Try and make it so by faith; and the least of you may be mighty through the strength of God. O for grace to trust God, and there is no telling what ye can do. Worms, ye are nothing, but ye have eaten princes; worms ye are noth ing, but ye have devoured the roots of cedars, and laid them level with the earth; worms, ye are nothing, but ye have piled rocks in the deep, deep sea, and wrecked mighty navies; worms, ye have eaten through the keel of the proudest ship that ever sailed the ocean. If ye have done this yourselves, what can not we do? your strength lies in your mouths; our strength lies in ours too. We will use our mouths in prayer, and in constant adoration, and we shall conquer yet, for God is with us, and victory is sure.

Ye trembling souls! dismiss your fears;
Be mercy all your theme:
Mercy, which, like a river, flows
In one continued stream.

Fear not the powers of earth and hell;
God will these powers restrain;
His mighty arm their rage repel,
And make their efforts vain.

Fear not the want of outward good;
He will for his provide,
Grant them supplies of daily food,
And all they need beside.

Fear not that he will e'er forsake,
Or leave his work undone;
He's faithful to his promises—
And faithful to his Son.

Fear not the terrors of the grave,
Or death's tremendous sting;
He will from endless wrath preserve—
To endless glory bring.

# SERMON XXIII.

## THE CONDESCENSION OF CHRIST.

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."—2 Cor. viii. 9.

The apostle, in this chapter, was endeavoring to stir up the Corinthians to liberality. He desired them to contribute something for those who were the poor of the flock, that he might be able to minister to their necessities. He tells them, that the churches of Macedonia, though very much poorer than the church at Corinth, had done even beyond their means for the relief of the Lord's family, and he exhorts the Corinthians to do the same. But suddenly recollecting that examples taken from inferiors seldom have a powerful effect he lays aside his argument drawn from the church of Macedonia, and he holds before them a reason for liberality which the hardest heart can scarcely resist, if once that reason be applied by the Spirit. "My brethren," said he, "there is One above, by whom you hope you have been saved, One whom you call Master and Lord, now if you will but imitate him, you can not be ungenerous or illiberal. For, my brethren, I tell you a thing which is an old thing with you and an undisputed truth—'For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.' Let this constrain you to benevolence." O Christian, whenever thou art inclined to an avaricious withholding from the church of God, think of thy Saviour giving up all that he had to serve thee, and canst thou then, when thou beholdest self-denial so noble, —canst thou then be selfish, and regard thyself, when the claims of the poor of the flock are pressed upon thee?

Remember Jesus; think thou seest him look thee in the face and say to thee, "I gave myself for thee, and dost thou withhold thyself from me? For if thou dost so, thou knowest not my love in all its heights and depths and lengths and breadths."

And now, dear friends, the argument of the apostle shall be our subject to-day. It divides itself in an extremely simple manner. We have first, *the pristine condition of our Saviour* —"He was rich." We have next, *his condescension*—"He became poor." And then we have *the effect and result of his poverty*—"That we might be made rich." We shall then close by giving you a doctrine, a question, and an exhortation. May God bless all these, and help us to tell them aright.

I. First, then, our text tells us THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS RICH. Think not that our Saviour began to live when he was born of the Virgin Mary; imagine not that he dates his existence from the manger at Bethlehem; remember he is the Eternal, he is before all things, and by him all things consist. There was never a time in which there was not God. And just so, there was never a period in which there was not Christ Jesus our Lord. He is self-existent, hath no beginning of days, neither end of years; he is the immortal, invisible, the only wise God, our Saviour. Now, in the past eternity which had elapsed before his mission to this world, we are told that Jesus Christ was rich; and to those of us who believe his glories and trust in his divinity, it is not hard to see how he was so. Jesus was rich *in possessions*. Lift up thine eye, believer, and for a moment review the riches of my Lord Jesus, before he condescended to become poor for thee. Behold him, sitting upon his throne and declaring his own all-sufficiency. "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the cattle on a thousand hills are mine. Mine are the hidden treasures of gold; mine are the pearls that the diver can not reach; mine every precious thing that earth hath seen." The Lord Jesus might have said, "I can stretch my scepter from the east even to the west, and all is mine; the whole of this world, and yon worlds that glitter in far off space, all are

mine. The illimitable expanse of unmeasured space, filled as it is with worlds that I have made, all this is mine. Fly upward, and thou canst not reach the summit of the hill of my dominions; dive downward, and thou canst not enter into the innermost depths of my sway. From the highest throne in glory to the lowest pit of hell, all, all is mine without exception. I can put the broad arrow of my kingdom upon every thing that I have made."

But he had besides that which makes men richer still. We have heard of kings in olden times who were fabulously rich, and when their riches were summed up, we read in the old romances, "And this man was possessed of the philosopher's stone, whereby he turned all things into gold." Surely all the treasures that he had before were as nothing compared with this precious stone that brought up the rear. Now, whatever might be the wealth of Christ in things created, he had the *power of creation*, and therein lay his boundless wealth. If he had pleased he could have spoken worlds into existence; he had but to lift his finger, and a new universe as boundless as the present would have leaped into existence. At the will of his mind, millions of angels would have stood before him, legions of bright spirits would have flashed into being. He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. He who said, "Light, be," and light was, had power to say to all things, "Be," and they should be. Herein then, lay his riches; this creating power was one of the brightest jewels of his crown.

We call men rich, too, who have *honor*, and though men have never so much wealth, yet if they be in disgrace and shame, they must not reckon themselves among the rich. But our Lord Jesus had honor, honor such as none but divine being could receive. When he sat upon his throne, before he relinquished the glorious mantle of his sovereignty to become a man, all earth was filled with his glory. He could look both beneath and all around him, and the inscription, "Glory be unto God," was written over all space; day and night the smoking incense of praise ascended before him from golden viols held by spirits who bowed in reverence

the harps of myriads of cherubim and seraphim continually thrilled with his praise, and the voices of all those mighty hosts were ever eloquent in adoration. It may be, that on set days the princes from the far off realms, the kings, the mighty ones of his boundless realms, came to the court of Christ, and brought each his annual revenue. Oh, who can tell but that in the vast eternity, at certain grand eras, the great bell was rung, and all the mighty hosts that were created gathered together in solemn review before his throne? Who can tell the high holiday that was kept in the court of heaven when these bright spirits bowed before his throne in joy and gladness, and, all united, raised their voices in shouts and hallelujahs such as mortal ear hath never heard. Oh, can ye tell the depths of the rivers of praise that flowed hard by the city of God? Can ye imagine to yourselves the sweetness of that harmony that perpetually poured into the ear of Jesus, Messias, King, Eternal, equal with God his Father? No; at the thought of the glory of his kingdom, and the riches and majesty of his power, our souls are spent within us, our words fail, we can not utter the tithe of his glories.

Nor was he poor in any other sense. He that hath wealth on earth, and honor too, is poor if he hath not *love*. I would rather be the pauper, dependent upon charity, and have love, than I would be the prince, despised and hated, whose death is looked for as a boon. Without love, man is poor—give him all the diamonds, and pearls, and gold that mortal hath conceived. But Jesus was not poor in love. When he came to earth, he did not come to get our love because his soul was solitary. Oh no, his Father had a full delight in him from all eternity. The heart of Jehovah, the first person of the Sacred Trinity, was divinely, immutably linked to him; he was beloved of the Father and of the Holy Spirit; the three persons took a sacred complacency and delight in each other And besides that, how was he loved by those bright spirits who had not fallen. I can not tell what countless orders and creatures there are created who still stand fast in obedience to God. It is not possible for us to know whether there are, or

not, as many races of created beings as we know there are created men on earth. We can not tell but that in the boundless regions of space, there are worlds inhabited by beings infinitely superior to us: but certain it is, there were the holy angels, and they loved our Saviour; they stood day and night with wings outstretched, waiting for his commands, hearkening to the voice of his word; and when he bade them fly, there was love in their countenance, and joy in their hearts. They loved to serve him, and it is not all fiction that when there was war in heaven, and when God cast out the devil and his legions, then the elect angels showed their love to him, being valiant in fight and strong in power. He wanted not our love to make him happy, he was rich enough in love without us.

Now, though a spirit from the upper world should come to tell you of the riches of Jesus he could not do it. Gabriel, in thy flights thou hast mounted higher than my imagination dares to follow thee, but thou hast never gained the summit of the throne of God.

"Dark with insufferable light thy skirts appear."

Jesus, who is he that could look upon the brow of thy Majesty, who is he that could comprehend the strength of the arm of thy might? Thou art God, thou art infinite, and we poor finite things, are lost in thee. The insect of an hour can not comprehend thyself. We bow before thee, we adore thee; thou art God over all, blessed for ever. But as for the comprehension of thy boundless riches, as for being able to tell thy treasures, or to reckon up thy wealth, that were impossible. All we know is, that the wealth of God, that the treasures of the infinite, that the riches of eternity, were all thine own: thou wast rich beyond all thought.

II. The Lord Jesus Christ, then, was rich. We all believe that, though none of us can truly speak it forth. Oh, how surprised angels were, when they were first informed that Jesus Christ, the Prince of Light and Majesty, intended to shroud himself in clay and become a babe, and live and die! We know not how it was first mentioned to the angels, but

when the rumor first began to get afloat among the sacred hosts, you may imagine what strange wonderment there was. What! was it true that he whose crown was all bedight with stars, would lay that crown aside? What! was it certain that he about whose shoulders was cast the purple of the universe, would become a man dressed in a peasant's garment? Could it be true that he who was everlasting and immortal would one day be nailed to a cross? Oh! how their wonderment increased! They desired to look into it. And when he descended from on high, they followed him; for Jesus was "seen of angels," and seen in a special sense, for they looked upon him in rapturous amazement, wondering what it all could mean. "He for our sakes became poor." Do you see him as on that day of heaven's eclipse he did ungird his majesty? Oh, can ye conceive the yet increasing wonder of the heavenly hosts when the deed was actually done, when they saw the tiara taken off, when they saw him unbind his girdle of stars, and cast away his sandals of gold? Can ye conceive it, when he said to them, "I do not disdain the womb of the virgin; I am going down to earth to become a man?" Can ye picture them as they declared they would follow him! Yes, they followed him as near as the world would permit them. And when they came to earth they began to sing, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men." Nor would they go away till they had made the shepherds wonder, and till heaven had hung out new stars in honor of the new-born King. And now wonder, ye angels, the Infinite has become an infant; he, upon whose shoulders the universe doth hang, hangs at his mother's breast; he who created all things, and bears up the pillars of creation, hath now become so weak that he must be carried by a woman! And oh, wonder, ye that knew him in his riches, whilst ye admire his poverty! Where sleeps the new-born King? Had he the best room in Cæsar's palace? hath a cradle of gold been prepared for him, and pillows of down, on which to rest his head? No, where the ox fed, in the dilapidated stable, in the manger, there the Saviour lies, swathed in the swaddling bands of the children of poverty! Nor there doth he

rest long; on a sudden his mother must carry him to Egypt he goeth there, and becometh a stranger in a strange land. When he comes back, see him that made the worlds handle the hammer and the nails, assisting his father in the trade of a carpenter! Mark him who has put the stars on high, and made them glisten in the night; mark him without one star of glory upon his brow—a simple child, as other children. Yet, leave for a while the scenes of his childhood and his earlier life; see him when he becomes a man, and now ye may say, indeed, that for our sakes he did become poor. Never was there a poorer man than Christ; he was the prince of poverty. He was the reverse of Crœsus—*he* might be on the top of the hill of riches, *Christ* stood in the lowest vale of poverty. Look at his dress, it is woven from the top through out, the garment of the poor! As for his food, he oftentimes did hunger; and always was dependent upon the charity of of others for the relief of his wants! He who scattered the harvest o'er the broad acres of the world, had not sometimes wherewithal to stay the pangs of hunger? He who digged the springs of the ocean, sat upon a well and said to a Samaritan woman, "Give me to drink!" He rode in no chariot, he he walked his weary way, foot sore, o'er the flints of Galilee! He had not where to lay his head. He looked upon the fox as it hurried to its burrow, and the fowl as it went to its resting-place, and he said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but I, the Son of man, have not where to lay my head." He who had once been waited on by angels, becomes the servant of servants, takes a towel, girds himself, and washes his disciples' feet! He who was once honored with the hallelujahs of ages, is now spit upon and despised! He who was loved by his Father, and had abundance of the wealth of affection, could say, "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." Oh, for words to picture the humiliation of Christ! What leagues of distance between him that sat upon the throne, and him that died upon the cross! Oh, who can tell the mighty chasm between yon neights of glory, and the cross of deepest woe! Trace him, Christian, he has left thee his manger to show thee how God

came down to man. He hath bequeathed thee his cross, to show thee how man can ascend to God. Follow him, follow him, all his journey through; begin with him in the wilderness of temptation, see him fasting there, and hungering with the wild beasts around him; trace him along his weary way, as the Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He is the by-word of the drunkard, he is the song of the scorner, and he is hooted at by the malicious; see him as they point their finger at him, and call him "drunken man and wine-bibber!" Follow him along his *via dolorosa*, until at last you meet him among the olives of Gethsemane; see him sweating great drops of blood! Follow him to the pavement of Gabbatha; see him pouring out rivers of gore beneath the cruel whips of Roman soldiers! With weeping eye follow him to the cross of Calvary, see him nailed there! Mark his poverty, so poor that they have stripped him naked from head to foot, and exposed him to the face of the sun! So poor, that when he asked them for water they gave him vinegar to drink! So poor that his unpillowed head is girt with thorns in death! Oh, Son of Man, I know not which to admire most, thine height of glory, or thy depths of misery! Oh, Man, slain for us, shall we not exalt thee? God over all, blessed for ever, shall we not give thee the loudest song? "He was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor." If I had a tale to tell you this day, of some king, who, out of love to some fair maiden, left his kingdom and became a peasant like herself, ye would stand and wonder, and would listen to the charming tale; but when I tell of God concealing his dignity to become our Saviour, our hearts are scarcely touched. Ah, my friends, we know the tale so well, we have heard it so often; and, alas, some of us tell it so badly that we cannot expect that you would be as interested in it as the subject doth demand. But surely, as it is said of some great works of architecture, that though they be seen every morning, there is always something fresh to wonder at; so we may say of Christ, that though we saw him every day, we should always see fresh reason to love, and wonder, and adore. "He was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor."

I have thought that there is one peculiarity about the poverty of Christ, that ought not to be forgotten by us. Those who were nursed upon the lap of want feel less the woes of their condition. But I have met with others whose poverty I could pity. They were once rich; their very dress which now hangs about them in tatters, tells you that they once stood foremost in the ranks of life. You meet them amongst the poorest of the poor; you pity them more than those who have been born and bred to poverty, because they have known something better. Amongst all those who are poor, I have always found the greatest amount of suffering in those who had seen better days.

I can remember, even now, the look of some who have said to me when they have received assistance—and I have given it as delicately as I could, lest it should look like charity—"Ah, sir, I have known better days." And the tear stood in the eye, and the heart was smitten at bitter recollections. The least slight to such a person, or even too unmasked a kindness, becomes like a knife cutting the heart. "I have known better days," sounds like a knell over their joys. And verily our Lord Jesus might have said in all his sorrows, "I have known better days than these." Methinks when he was tempted of the devil in the wilderness, it must have been hard in him to have restrained himself from dashing the devil into pieces. If I had been the Son of God, methinks, feeling as I do now, if that devil had tempted me, I should have dashed him into the nethermost hell, in the twinkling of an eye! And then conceive the patience our Lord must have had, standing on the pinnacle of the temple, when the devil said, "Fall down and worship me." He would not touch him, the vile deceiver, but let him do what he pleased. Oh! what might of misery and love there must have been in the Saviour's heart when he was spit upon by the men he had created; when the eyes he himself had filled with vision looked on him with scorn, and when the tongues, to which he himself had given utterance, hissed and blasphemed him! Oh, my friends, if the Saviour had felt as we do, and I doubt not he did feel in some measure as we do—only by great patience he curbed himself—me

thinks he might have swept them all away; and, as they said, he might have come down from the cross, and delivered himself, and destroyed them utterly. It was mighty patience that could bear to tread this world beneath his feet, and not to crush it, when it so ill-treated its Redeemer. You marvel at the patience which restrained him; you marvel also at the poverty he must have felt, the poverty of spirit, when they rebuked him and he reviled them not again; when they scoffed him, and yet he said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He had seen brighter days; that made his misery more bitter, and his poverty more poor.

III. Well, now we come to the third point—WHY DID THE SAVIOUR COME TO DIE AND BE POOR? Hear this, ye sons of Adam—the Scripture says, "For your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich." For *your* sakes. Now, when I address you as a great congregation, you will not feel the beauty of this expression, "For *your* sake." Husband and wife, walking in the fear of God, let me take you by the hand and look you in the face, let me repeat those words, "for *your* sakes he became poor." Young man, let a brother of thine own age, look on thee and repeat these words, "Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor." Gray-headed believer, let me look on you and say the same, "For *your* sake he became poor." Brethren, take the word home, and see if it does not melt you—"Though he was rich, yet for *my* sake he became poor." Beg for the influences of the Spirit upon that truth, and it will make your heart devout and your spirit loving—"I the chief of sinners am, yet for my sake he died." Come, let me hear you speak; let us bring the sinner here, and let him soliloquize—"I cursed him, I blasphemed, and yet for my sake he was made poor; I scoffed at his ministers, I broke his Sabbath, yet for my sake was he made poor. What! Jesus, couldst thou die for one who was not worth thy having? Couldst thou shed thy blood for one who would have shed thy blood, if it had been in his power? What! couldst thou die for one so worthless, so vile?" "Yes, yes," says Jesus, "I shed that blood for thee." Now let the saint speak: "I," he may say, "have professed

to love him, but how cold my love, how little have I served him! How far have I lived from him; I have not had sweet communion with him as I ought to have had. When have I been spending and spent in his service? And yet, my Lord thou dost say, 'for *thy* sake I was made poor.'" "Yes," saith Jesus, "see me in my miseries; see me in my agonies; see me in my death—all these I suffered for *thy* sake." Wilt thou not love him who loved thee to this great excess, and became poor for thy sake?

That, however, is not the point to which we wish to bring you, just now; the point is this, *the reason why Christ died* was, "that we through his poverty might be rich." He became poor from his riches, that our poverty might become rich out of his poverty. Brethren, we have now a joyful theme before us—those who are partakers of the Saviour's blood are rich. All those for whom the Saviour died, having believed in his name and given themselves to him, are this day rich. And yet I have some of you here who can not call a foot of land your own. You have nothing to call your own to-day, you know not how you will be supported through another week; you are poor, and yet if you be a child of God, I do know that Christ's end is answered in you; *you are rich.* No, I did not mock you when I said you were rich: I did not taunt you—you are. You are really rich; you are *rich in possessions;* you have in your possession now things more costly than gems, more valuable than gold and silver. Silver and gold, have I none, thou mayest say; but if thou canst say afterward, "Christ is all," thou hast outspoken all that the man can say who had piles of gold and silver. "But," thou sayest, "I have nothing." Man, thou hast all things. Knowest thou not what Paul said? He declares that "things present and things to come, and this world, and life and death, all are yours and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." The great machinery of providence has no wheel which does not revolve for you. The great economy of grace with all its fullness, is yours. Remember that adoption, justification, sanctification, all are yours. Thou hast everything that heart can wish in spiritual things; and thou hast everything that is necessary

for this life; for you know who hath said, "having food and raiment, let us therewith be content." You are rich; rich with true riches, and not with the riches of a dream. There are times when men by night do scrape gold and silver together, like shells upon the sea shore; but when they wake in the morning they find themselves penniless. But, yours are everlasting treasures; yours are solid riches. When the sun of eternity shall have melted the rich man's gold away, yours shall endure. A rich man has a *cistern* full of riches, but a poor saint has got a *fountain* of mercy, and he is the richest who has a fountain. Now, if my neighbor be a rich man, he may have as much wealth as ever he pleases, it is only a cistern full, it will soon be exhausted; but a Christian has a fountain that ever flows, and let him draw, draw on forever, the fountain will still keep on flowing. However large may be the stagnant pool, if it be stagnant, it is but of little worth; but the flowing stream, though it seem to be but small, needs but time, and it will have produced an immense volume of precious water. Thou art never to have a great pool of riches, they are always to keep on flowing to thee; "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." As old William Huntingdon says, "The Christian has a hand-basket portion. Many a man, when his daughter marries, does not give her much, but he says to her, 'I shall send you a sack of flour one day, and so-and-so the next day, and now and then a sum of gold; and as long as I live I will always send you something." Says he, "She will get a great deal more than her sister, who has had a thousand pounds down. That is how my God deals with me; he gives to the rich man all at once, but to me day by day." Ah, Egypt, thou wert rich when thy granaries were full, but those granaries might be emptied; Israel was far richer when they could not see their granaries, but only saw the manna drop from heaven, day by day. Now, Christian, that is thy portion—the portion of the fountain always flowing, and not of the cistern-full, and soon to be emptied.

But remember, O saint, that thy wealth does not all lie in thy possession just now; remember thou art rich in *promises*. Let a man be never so poor as to the metal that he hath, let

him have in his possession promissory notes from rich and true men, and he says, "I have no gold in my purse, but here is a note for such-and-such a sum—I know the signature—I can trust the firm—I am rich, though I have no metal in hand." And so the Christian can say, "If I have no riches in possession, I have the promise of them; my God hath said, 'No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly,'—that is a promise that makes me rich. He has told me, 'My bread shall be given me, and my water shall be sure.' I can not doubt his signature, I know his word to be authentic; and as for his faithfulness, I would not so dishonor him as to think he would break his promise. No, the promise is as good as the thing itself. If it be God's promise, it is just as sure that I shall have it, as if I had it."

But then the Christian is very rich in *reversion*. When a certain old man dies that I know of, I believe that I shall be so immensely rich that I shall dwell in a place that is paved with gold, the walls of which are builded with precious stones. But, my friends, you have all got an old man to die, and when he is dead, if you are followers of Jesus, you will come in for your inheritance. You know who that old man is, he is very often spoken of in Scripture; may the old man in you die daily, and may the new man be strengthened in you. When that old man of corruption, your old nature, shall totter into its grave, then you will come in for your property. Christians are like heirs, they have not much in their minority, and they are minors now; but when they come of age, they shall have the whole of their estate. If I meet a minor, he says, "That is my property." "You can not sell it, sir; you can not lay hold of it." "No," says he, "I know I can not; but it is mine when I am one-and-twenty, I shall then have complete control; but at the same time, it is as really mine now as it ever will be. I have a legal right to it, and though my guardians take care of it for me, it is mine, not theirs." And now, Christian, in heaven there is a crown of gold which is thine to-day; it will be no more thine when thou hast it on thy head than it is now.

I remember to have heard it reported that I once spoke in

metaphor, and bade Christians look at all the crowns hanging in rows in heaven—very likely I did say it—but if not, I will say it now. Up, Christian, see the crowns all ready, and mark thine own; stand thou and wonder at it; see with what pearls it is bedight, and how heavy it is with gold! And that is for thy head, thy poor aching head; thy poor tortured brain shall yet have that crown for its arraying! And see that garment, it is stiff with gems, and white like snow; and that is for thee! When thy week-day garment shall be done with, this shall be the raiment of thy everlasting Sabbath. When thou hast worn out this poor body, there remaineth for thee, "A house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Up to the summit, Christian, and survey thine inheritance; and when thou hast surveyed it all, when thou hast seen thy present possessions, thy promised possessions, thine entailed possessions, then remember that all these were bought by the poverty of thy Saviour! Look thou upon all thou hast, and say, "Christ bought them for me." Look thou on every promise, and see the bloodstains on it; yea, look too, on the harps and crowns of heaven, and read the bloody purchase! Remember, thou couldst never have been anything but a damned sinner, unless Christ had bought thee! Remember, if he had remained in heaven, thou wouldst for ever have remained in hell; unless he had shrouded and eclipsed his own honor, thou wouldst never have had a ray of light to shine upon thee. Therefore, bless his dear name, extol him, trace every stream to the fountain; and bless him who is the source, and the fountain of everything thou hast. Brethren, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

IV. I have not done, I have three things now to say, and I shall say them as briefly as possible.

The first *is a doctrine;* the doctrine is this: If Christ in his poverty made us rich, what will he do now that he is glorified If the Man of Sorrows saved my soul, will the man now exalted suffer it to perish? If the dying Saviour availed for our salvation, should not the living, interceding Saviour, abundantly secure it?

"He lived, he lives and sits above,
For ever interceding there;
What shall divide us from his love,
Or what shall sink us in despair?"

If when the nail was in thine hand, O Jesus, thou didst root all hell, canst thou be defeated now that thou hast grasped the scepter? If, when the thorn crown was put about thy brow, thou didst prostrate the dragon, canst thou be overcome and conquered now that the acclamations of angels are ascending to thee? No, my brethren, we can trust the glorified Jesus; we can repose ourselves on his bosom; if he was so strong in poverty, what must he be in riches?

The next thing was *a question*, that question was a simple one. My hearer, hast thou been made rich by Christ's poverty? Thou sayest, "I am good enough without Christ; I want no Saviour." Ah, thou art like her of old, who said, "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, whereas, saith the Lord, 'Thou art naked, and poor, and miserable.'" O ye that live by good works, and think that ye shall go to heaven because you are as good as others; all the merits you can ever earn yourselves, are good for nothing. All that human nature ever made, turns to a blot and a curse. If those are your riches, you are no saints. But can you say this morning, my hearers, "I am by nature without anything, and God has by the power of his Spirit taught me my nothingness."

My brother, my sister, hast thou taken Christ to be thine all in all? Canst thou say this day, with an unfaltering tongue, "My Lord, my God, I have nothing; but thou art my all?" Come, I beseech thee, do not shirk the question. Thou art careless, heedless; answer it, then, in the negative. But when thou hast answered it, I beseech thee, beware of what thou hast said. Thou art sinful, thou feelest it. Come I beseech thee, and lay hold on Jesus. Remember, Christ came to make those rich, that have nothing of their own. My Saviour is a physician; if you can heal yourself, he will have nothing to do with you. Remember, my Saviour came to clothe the naked. He will clothe you, if you have not a

rag of your own; but unless you let him do it from head to foot, he will have nothing to do with you. Christ says he will never have a partner; he will do all, or none. Come then, hast thou given up all to Christ? Hast thou no reliance and trust save in the cross of Jesus? Then thou hast answered the question well. Be happy, be joyous; if death should surprise thee the next hour, thou art secure. Go on thy way, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

And now I close with the third thing, which was *an exhortation.* Sinner, dost thou this morning feel thy poverty? Then look to Christ's poverty. O ye that are to-day troubled on account of sin—and there are many such here—God has not let you alone; he has been plowing your heart with the sharp plowshare of conviction; you are this day saying, "What must I do to be saved?" You would give all you have, to have an interest in Jesus Christ. Your soul is this day sore broken and tormented. O sinner, if thou wouldst find salvation, thou must find it in the veins of Jesus. Now, wipe that tear from thine eye a moment, and look here. Dost thou see him high, where the cross rears its terrible tree? There he is. Dost see him? Mark his head. See the thorn-crown, and the beaded drops still standing on his temples. Mark his eyes; they are just closing in death. Canst see the lines of agony, so desperate in woe? Dost see his hands? See the streamlets of blood flowing down them. Hark, he is about to speak. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Didst hear that, sinner? Pause a moment longer, take another survey of his person; how emaciated his body, and how sick his spirit! Look at him. But hark, he is about to speak again—"It is finished." What means he by that? He means, that he has finished thy salvation. Look thou to him, and find salvation there. Remember, to be saved, all that God wants of a penitent, is to look to Jesus. My life for this—if you will risk your all on Christ, you shall be saved. I will be Christ's bondsman to-day, to be bound for ever, if he break his promise. He has said, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." It is not your hands that will save you; it must be your eyes. Look from those works

whereby you hope to be saved. No longer strive to weave a garment that will not hide your sin, throw away that shuttle; it is only filled with cobwebs. What garment can you weave with that? Look thou to him, and thou art saved. Never sinner looked, and was lost. Dost mark that eye there? One glance will save thee, one glance will set thee free. Dost thou say, "I am a guilty sinner?" Thy guilt is the reason why I bid thee look. Dost thou say, "I cannot look?" Oh, may God help thee to look now. Remember, Christ will not reject thee; thou mayest reject him. Remember now, there is the cup of mercy put to thy lip by the hand of Jesus. I know, if thou feelest thy need, Satan may tempt thee not to drink, but he will not prevail; thou wilt put thy lip feebly and faintly, perhaps, to it. But oh, do but sip it; and the first draught shall give thee bliss; and the deeper thou shalt drink, the more of heaven shalt thou know. Sinner, believe on Jesus Christ; hear the whole gospel preached to thee. It is written in God's Word, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Hear me translate it—He that believeth and is *immersed* shall be saved. Believe thou, trust thyself on the Saviour, make a profession of thy faith in baptism, and then thou mayest rejoice in Jesus, that he hath saved thee. But remember not to make a profession till thou hast believed: remember, baptism is nothing, until thou hast faith. Remember, it is a farce and a falsehood, until thou hast first believed; and afterwards, it is nothing but the profession of thy faith. Oh, believe that; cast thyself upon Christ, and thou art saved for ever! The Lord add his blessing, for the Saviour's sake. Amen.

# SERMON XXIV.

## THE GREAT RESERVOIR.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."—PROVERBS, iv. 23.

If I should vainly attempt to fashion my discourse after lofty models, I should this morning compare the human heart to the ancient city of Thebes, out of whose hundred gates multitudes of warriors were wont to march. As was the city such were her armies, as was her inward strength, such were they who came forth of her. I might then urge the necessity of keeping the heart, because it is the metropolis of our manhood, the citadel and armory of our humanity. Let the chief fortress surrender to the enemy, and the occupation of the rest must be an easy task. Let the principal stronghold be possessed by evil, the whole land must be overrun thereby. Instead, however, of doing this, I shall attempt what possibly I may be able to perform, by a humble metaphor and a simple figure, which will be easily understood; I shall endeavor to set forth the wise man's doctrine, that our life issues from the heart, and thus I shall labor to show the absolute necessity of keeping the heart with all diligence.

You have seen the great reservoirs provided by our water companies, in which the water which is to supply hundreds of streets and thousands of houses is kept. Now, the heart is just the reservoir of man, and our life is allowed to flow in its proper season. That life may flow through different pipes—the mouth, the hand, the eye; but still all the issues of hand, of eye, of lip, derive their source from the great fountain and central reservoir, the heart; and hence there is no difficulty in showing the great necessity that exists for keeping this reservoir, the heart, in a proper state and condition, since

otherwise that which flows through the pipes must be tainted and corrupt. May the Holy Spirit now direct our meditations.

Mere moralists very often forget the heart, and deal exclusively with the lesser powers. Some of them say, "If a man's life be wrong, it is better to alter the *principles* upon which his conduct is modeled: we had better adopt another scheme of living; society must be re-modeled, so that man may have an opportunity for the display of virtues, and less temptation to indulge in vice." It is as if, when the reservoir was filled with poisonous or polluted fluid, some sage counsellor should propose that all the piping had better be taken up, and fresh pipes laid down, so that the water might run through fresh channels; but who does not perceive that it would be all in vain, if the fountain-head were polluted, however good the channels. So in vain the rules by which men hope to fashion their lives; in vain the regimen by which we seek to constrain ourselves to the semblance of goodness, unless the heart be right, the very best scheme of life shall fall to the ground, and fail to effect its design. Others say, "Well, if the life be wrong, it would be better to set the understanding right: you must inform man's judgment, educate him, teach him better, and when his head is well informed, then his life will be improved." Now, *understanding* is, if I may use such a figure, the stop-cock which controls the emotions, lets them flow on, or stops them; and it is as if some very wise man, when a reservoir had been poisoned, proposed that there should be a new person employed to turn the water off or on, in hope that the whole difficulty would thus be obviated. If we followed his advice, if we found the wisest man in the world to have control of the fountain, Mr. Understanding would still be incapable of supplying us with healthy streams, until we had first of all purged the cistern whence they flowed. The Arminian divine, too, sometimes suggests another way of improving man's life. He deals with the *will*. He says, the will must first of all be conquered, and if the will be right, then every thing will be in order. Now, *will* is like the great engine which forces the water out of the fountain-head along the pipes, so that it is made to flow into our dwel-

fings. The learned counsellor proposes that there should be a new steam-engine employed to force the water along the pipes. "If," says he, "we had the proper machinery for forcing the fluid, then all would be well." No, sir, if the stream be poisonous, you may have axles to turn on diamonds, and you may have a machine that is made of gold, and a force as potent as Omnipotence, but even then you have not accompilshed your purpose until you have cleansed the polluted fountain, and purged the issues of life which flow therefrom. The wise man in our text seems to say, "Beware of misapplying your energies, be careful to begin in the right place." It is very necessary the understanding should be right; it is quite needful the will should have its proper predominance; it is very necessary that you should keep every part of man in a healthy condition; but," says he, "if you want to promote true holiness, you must begin with the heart, for out of it are the issues of life; and when you have purged *it*, when you have made its waters pure and limpid, then shall the current flow and bless the inhabitants with clear water; but not till then." Here let us pause and ask the solemn and vital question, "Is my heart right in the sight of God?" For unless the inner man has been renewed by the grace of God, through the Holy Spirit, our heart is full of rottenness, filth, and abominations. And if so, here must all our cleansing begin, if it be real and satisfactory. Unrenewed men, I beseech you ponder the words of an ancient Christian which I here repeat in thine ear:—"It is no matter what is the sign, though an angel, that hangs without, if the devil and sin dwell therein. New trimmings upon an old garment will not make it new, only give it a new appearance; and truly it is no good husbandry to bestow a great deal of cost in mending up an old suit, that will soon drop to tatters and rags, when a little more might purchase a new one that is lasting. And is it not better to labor to get a new heart, that all thou dost may be accepted, and thou saved, than to lose all the pains thou takest in religion, and thyself also for want of it?"

Now, ye who love the Lord, let me take you to the reservoir of your heart, and let me urge upon you the great neces

sity of keeping the heart right, if you would have the stream of your life happy for yourselves and beneficial to others.

I. First, keep the heart *full.* However pure the water may be in the central reservoir, it will not be possible for the company to provide us with an abundant supply of water, unless the reservoir itself be full. An empty fountain will most assuredly beget empty pipes; and let the machinery be never so accurate, let every thing else be well ordered, yet if that reservoir be dry, we may wait in vain for any of the water that we require. Now, you know many people—(you are sure to meet with them in your own society, and your own circle; for I know of no one so happy as to be without such acquaintances)—whose lives are just dry, good-for-nothing emptiness. They never accomplish anything; they have no mental force; they have no moral power; what they say, nobody thinks of noticing; what they do is scarcely ever imitated.

We have known fathers whose moral force has been so despicable, that even their children have scarcely been able to imitate them. Though imitation was strong enough in them, yet have they unconsciously felt, even in their childhood, that their father was, after all, but a child like themselves, and had not grown to be a man. Do you not know many people, who if they were to espouse a cause, and it were entrusted to them, would most certainly pilot it to shipwreck. Failure would be the total result. You could not use them as clerks in your office, without feeling certain that your business would be nearly murdered. If you were to employ them to manage a concern for you, you would be sure they would manage to spend all the money, but could never produce a doit. If they were placed in comfortable circumstances for a few months, they would go on carelessly till all was gone. They are just the flats, preyed on by the sharpers in the world; they have no manly strength, no power at all. See these people in religion: it does not matter much what are their doctrinal sentiments, it is quite certain they will never affect the minds of others. Put them in the pulpit: they are the slaves of the deacons, or else they are over-ridden by the church; they

never have an opinion of their own, can not come out with a thing; they have not the heart to say, "Such a thing is, and I know it is." These men just live on, but as far as any utility to the world is concerned, they might almost as well never have been created, except it were to be fed upon by other people. Now, some say that this is the fault of men's heads: "Such a one," they say, "could not get on; he had a small head; it was clean impossible for him to prosper, his head was small, he could not do anything; he had not enough force." Now, that may be true; but I know what was truer still—he had got a small heart and that heart was empty. For, mark you, a man's force in the world, other things being equal, is just in the ratio of the force and strength of his heart. A full-hearted man is always a powerful man: if he be erroneous, then he is powerful for error; if the thing is in his heart, he is sure to make it notorious, even though it may be a downright falsehood. Let a man be never so ignorant, still if his heart be full of love to a cause, he becomes a powerful man for that object, because he has got heart-power, heart force. A man may be deficient in many of the advantages of education, in many of those niceties which are so much looked upon in society; but once give him a good strong heart, that beats hard, and there is no mistake about his power. Let him have a heart that is right full up to the brim with an object, and that man will do the thing, or else he will die gloriously defeated, and will glory in his defeat. HEART IS POWER. It is the emptiness of men's hearts that makes them so feeble. Men do not feel what they are at. Now, the man in business that goes heart and soul into his business, is more likely to prosper than anybody else. That is the preacher we want, the man that has a full soul. Let him have a head—the more he knows the better; but, after all, give him a big heart; and when his heart beats, if his heart be full, it will, under God, either make the hearts of his congregation beat after him; or else make them conscious that he is laboring hard to compel them to follow. O! if we had more heart in our Master's service, how much more labor we could endure. You are a Sunday-school teacher, young man, and you are complaining

that you can not get on in the Sunday-school. Sir, the service-pipe would give out plenty of water if the heart were full. Perhaps you do not love your work. O, strive to love your work more, and then when your heart is full, you will go on well enough. "O," saith the preacher, "I am weary of my work in preaching; I have little success; I find it a hard toil." The answer to that question is, "Your heart is not full of it, for if you loved preaching, you would breathe preaching, feed upon preaching, and find a compulsion upon you to follow preaching; and your heart being full of the thing, you would be happy in the employment. O for a heart that is full, and deep, and broad! Find the man that hath such a soul as that, and that is the man from whom the living waters shall flow, to make the world glad with their refreshing streams.

Learn, then, the necessity of keeping the heart full; and let the necessity make you ask this question—"But how can I keep my heart full? How can my emotions be strong? How can I keep my desires burning and my zeal inflamed?" Christian! there is one text which will explain all this. "All my springs are in thee," said David. If thou hast all thy springs in God, thy heart will be full enough. If thou dost go to the foot of Calvary, there will thy heart be bathed in love and gratitude. If thou dost frequent the vale of retirement, and there talk with thy God, it is there that thy heart shall be full of calm resolve. If thou goest out with thy Master to the hill of Olivet, and dost with him look down upon a wicked Jerusalem, and weep over it with him, then will thy heart be full of love for never-dying souls. If thou dost continually draw thine impulse, thy life, the whole of thy being from the Holy Spirit, without whom thou canst do nothing; and if thou dost live in close communion with Christ, there will be no fear of thy having a dry heart. He who lives without prayer—he who lives with little prayer—he who seldom reads the Word—he who seldom looks up to heaven for a fresh influence from on high—he will be the man whose heart will become dry and barren; but he who calls in secret on his God—who spends much time in holy retirement—who delights to meditate on the words of the

Most High—whose soul is given up to Christ—who delights in his fullness, rejoices in his all-sufficiency, prays for his second coming, and delights in the thought of his glorious advent—such a man, I say, must have an overflowing heart; and as his heart is, such will his life be. It will be a full life; it will be a life that will speak from the sepulcher, and wake the echoes of the future. "Keep thine heart with all diligence," and entreat the Holy Spirit to keep it full; for, otherwise, the issues of thy life will be feeble, shallow, and superficial; and thou mayest as well not have lived at all.

2. Secondly, it would be of little use for our water companies to keep their reservoirs full, if they did not also keep them *pure*. I remember to have read a complaint in the newspaper of a certain provincial town, that a tradesman had been frequently supplied with fish from the water company, large eels having crept down the pipe, and sometimes creatures a little more loathsome. We have known such a thing as water companies supplying us with solids when they ought to have given us nothing but pure crystal. Now, no one likes that. The reservoir should be kept pure and clean; and unless the water comes from a pure spring, and is not impregnated with deleterious substances, however full the reservoir may be, the company will fail of satisfying or of benefiting its customers. Now it is essential for us to do with our hearts as the company must do with its reservoir. We must keep our hearts pure; for if the heart be not pure, the life can not be pure. It is quite impossible that it should be so. You see a man whose whole conversation is impure and unholy; when he speaks he lards his language with oaths; his mind is low and groveling; none but the things of unrighteousness are sweet to him, for he has no soul above the kennel and the dunghill. You meet with another man who understands enough to avoid violating the decencies of life; but still, at the same time he likes filthiness; any low joke, anything that will in some way stir unholy thoughts is just the thing that he desires. For the ways of God he has no relish; in God's house he finds no pleasure, in his Word no delight. What is the cause of this? Say some, it is because of his family connections—because of

the situation in which he stands—because of his early education, and all that. No, no; the simple answer to that is the answer we gave to the other inquiry; the heart is not right; for, if the heart were pure, the life would be pure too. The unclean stream betrays the fountain. A valuable book of German parables, by old Christian Scriver, contains the following homely metaphor:—"A drink was brought to Gotthold, which tasted of the vessel in which it had been contained; and this led him to observe. We have here an emblem of our thoughts, words, and works. Our heart is defiled by sin, and hence a taint of sinfulness cleaves unfortunately to everything we take in hand; and although, from the force of habit, this may be imperceptible to us, it does not escape the eye of the omniscient, holy, and righteous God." Whence come our carnality, covetuousness, pride, sloth and unbelief? Are they not all to be traced to the corruption of our hearts? When the hands of a clock move in an irregular manner, and when the bell strikes the wrong hour, be assured there is something wrong within. O how needful that the main-spring of our motives be in proper order, and the wheels in a right condition.

Ah! Christian keep thy heart pure. Thou sayest, "How can I do this?" Well, there was of old a stream of Marah, to which the thirsty pilgrims in the desert came to drink; and when they came to taste of it, it was so brackish that though their tongues were like torches, and the roofs of their mouths were parched with heat, yet they could not drink of that bitter water. Do you remember the remedy which Moses prescribed? It is the remedy which we prescribe to you this morning. He took a certain tree, and he cast it into the waters, and they became sweet and clear. Your heart is by nature like Marah's water, bitter and impure. There is a certain tree, you know its name, that tree on which the Saviour hung, *the cross*. Take that tree, put it into your heart, and though it were even more impure than it is, that sweet cross, applied by the Holy Spirit, would soon transform it into its own nature, and make it pure. Christ Jesus in the heart is the sweet purification. He is made unto us *sanctification*. Elijah cast salt into the waters; but we must cast

the blood of Jesus there. Once let us know and love Jesus, once let his cross become the object of our adoration and the theme of our delight, the heart will begin its cleansing, and the life will become pure also. Oh! that we all did learn the sacred lesson of fixing the cross in the heart! Christian man! love thy Saviour more; cry to the Holy Spirit that thou mayest have more affection for Jesus; and then, however gainful may be thy sin, thou wilt say with the poet,

"Now for the love I bear his name,
What was my gain I count my loss;
My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to his cross."

The cross in the heart is the purifier of the soul; it purges and it cleanses the chambers of the mind. Christian! keep thy heart pure, "for out of it are the issues of life."

3. In the third place, there is one thing to which our water companies need never pay much attention; that is to say, if their water be pure, and the reservoir be full, they need not care to keep it *peaceable* and quiet, for let it be stirred to a storm, we should receive our water in the same condition as usual. It is not so, however, with the heart. Unless the heart be kept peaceable, the life will not be happy. If calm doth not reign over that inner lake within the soul which feeds the rivers of our life, the rivers themselves will always be in storm. Our outward acts will always tell that they were born in tempests, by rolling in tempests themselves. Let us just understand this, *first*, with regard to ourselves. We all desire to lead a joyous life; the bright eye and the elastic foot are things which we each of us desire; to carry about a contented mind is that to which most men are continually aspiring. Let us all remember, that the only way to keep our life peaceful and happy is to keep the heart at rest; for come poverty, come wealth, come honor, come shame, come plenty, or come scarcity, if the heart be quiet there will be happiness anywhere. But whatever the sunshine and the brightness, if the heart be troubled the whole life must be troubled too. There is a sweet story told in one of the German martyrologies well worth both my telling and your remembering. A

holy martyr who had been kept for a long time in prison, and had there exhibited, to the wonderment of all who saw him, the strongest constancy and patience, was at last, upon the day of execution, brought out, and tied to the stake preparatory to the lighting of the fire. While in this position "he craved permission to speak once more to the judge, who, according to the Swiss custom, was required to be also present at the execution. After repeatedly refusing, the judge at last came forward, when the peasant addressed him thus: You have this day condemned me to death. Now, I freely admit that I am a poor sinner, but positively deny that I am a heretic, because from my heart I believe and confess all that is contained in the Apostles' Creed (which he thereupon repeated from beginning to end). Now, then, sir, he proceeded to say, I have but one last request to make, which is, that you will approach and place your hand, first upon my breast and then upon your own, and afterwards frankly and truthfully declare, before this assembled multitude, which of the two, mine or yours, is beating most violently with fear and anxiety. For my part, I quit the world with alacrity and joy, to go and be with Christ, in whom I have always believed; what your feelings are at this moment is best known to yourself. The judge could make no answer, and commanded them instantly to light the pile. It was evident, however, from his looks, that he was more afraid than the martyr."

Now, keep your heart right. Do not let it smite you. The Holy Spirit says of David, "David's heart smote him." The smiting of the heart is more painful to a good man than the rough blows of the fist. It is a blow that can be felt; it is iron that enters into the soul. Keep your heart in good temper. Do not let that get fighting with you. Seek that the peace of God which passeth all understanding, may keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus. Bend your knee at night, and with a full confession of sin, express your faith in Christ, then you may "dread the grave as little as your bed." Rise in the morning and give your heart to God, and put the sweet angels of perfect love and holy faith therein, and you may go into the world, and were it full of lions and of tigers,

you would no more need to dread it than Daniel when he was cast into the lion's den. Keep the heart peaceable and your life will be happy.

Remember, in the *second* place, that it is just the same with regard to other men. I should hope we all wish to lead quiet lives, and as much as lieth in us to live peaceably with all men. There is a particular breed of men—I do not know where they come from, but they are mixed up now with the English race and to be met with here and there—men who seem to be born for no other reason whatever but to fight—always quarreling, and never pleased. They say that all Englishmen are a little that way—that we are never happy unless we have something to grumble at, and that the worst thing that ever could be done with us would be to give us some entertainment at which we could not grumble, because we should be mortally offended, because we had not the opportunity of displaying our English propensities. I do not know whether that is true of all of us, but it is of some. You can not sit with them in a room but they introduce a topic upon which you are quite certain to disagree with them. You could not walk with them half a mile along the public streets but they would be sure to make an observation against every body and every thing they saw. They talk about ministers: one man's doctrine is too high, another's is too low; one man they think is a great deal too effeminate and precise, another they say is so vulgar they would not hear him at all. They say of another man that they do not think he attends to visiting his people; of another, that he visits so much that he never prepares for the pulpit. No one can be right for them.

Why is this? Whence arises this continual snarling? The heart must again supply the answer, they are morose and sullen in the inward parts, and hence their speech betrayeth them. They have not had their hearts brought to feel that God hath made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth, or if they have felt that, they have never been brought to spell in their hearts—"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." Whichever may have been put there of the other ten, the

eleventh commandment was never written there. "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." That they forgot. Oh! dear Christian people, seek to have your hearts full of love, and if you have had little hearts till now that could not hold love enough for more than your own denomination, get your hearts enlarged, so that you may have enough to send out service-pipes to all God's people throughout the habitable globe; so that whenever you meet a man who is a true-born heir of heaven, he has nothing to do but to turn to the tap, and out of your loving heart will begin to flow issues of true, fervent, unconstrained, willing, living love. Keep thine heart peaceable, that thy life may be so; for out of the heart are the issues of life.

How is this to be done? We reply again, we must ask the Holy Spirit to pacify the heart. No voice but that which on Galilee's lake said to the storm "Be still," can ever lay the troubled waters of a stormy heart. No strength but Omnipotence can still the tempest of human nature. Cry out mightily unto him. He still sleeps in the vessel with his church. Ask him to awake, lest your piety should perish in the waters of contention. Cry unto him that he may give your heart peace and happiness. Then shall your life be peaceful; spend ye it where ye may, in trouble or in joy.

4. A little further. When the water-works company have gathered an abundance of water in the reservoir, there is one thing they must always attend to, and that is, they must take care they do not attempt too much, or otherwise they will fail. Suppose they lay on a great main pipe in one place to serve one city, and another main pipe to serve another, and the supply which was intended to fill one channel is diverted into a score of streams, what would be the result? Why nothing would be done well, but everyone would have cause to complain. Now, man's heart is after all so little, that there is only one great direction in which its living water can ever flow; and my fourth piece of advice to you from this text is, Keep your heart *undivided.* Suppose you see a lake, and there are twenty or thirty streamlets running from it: why, there will not be one strong river in the whole country; there

will be a number of little brooks which will be dried up in the summer, and will be temporary torrents in the winter. They will every one of them be useless for any great purposes, because there is not water enough in the lake to feed more than one great stream. Now, a man's heart has only enough life in it to pursue one object fully. Ye must not give half your love to Christ, and the other half to the world. No man can serve God and mammon because there is not enough life in the heart to serve the two. Alas! many people try this, and they fail both ways. I have known a man who has tried to let some of his heart run into the world, and another part he allowed to drip into the church, and the effect has been this: when he came into the church he was suspected of hypocrisy. "Why," they said, "if he were truly with us, could he have done yesterday what he did, and then come and profess so much to-day?" The church looks upon him as a suspicious one: or if he deceive them they feel he is not of much use to them, because they have not got all his heart. What is the effect of his conduct in the world? Why, his religion is a fetter to him there. The world will not have him, and the church will not have him; he wants to go between the two, and both despise him. I never saw anybody try to walk on both sides of the street but a drunken man: *he* tried it, and it was very awkward work indeed; but I have seen many people in a moral point of view try to walk on both sides of the street, and I thought there was some kind of intoxication in them, or else they would have given it up as a very foolish thing. Now, if I thought this world and the pleasures thereof worth my seeking, I would just seek them and go after them, and I would not pretend to be religious; but if Christ be Christ, and if God be God, let us give our whole hearts to him, and not go shares with the world. Many a church member manages to walk on both sides of the street in the following manner: His sun is very low indeed—it has not much light, not much heat, and is come almost to its setting. Now sinking suns cast long shadows, and this man stands on the world's side of the street, and casts a long shadow right across the road, to the opposite side of the wall just across the pave

ment. Ay, it is all we get with many of you. You come and you take the sacramental bread and wine; you are baptized; you join the church; and what we get is just your shadow; there is your substance on the other side of the street, after all. What is the good of the empty chrysalis of a man? And yet many of our church members are little better. They just do as the snake does that leaves its slough behind. They give us their slough, their skin, the chrysalis case in which life once was, and then they go themselves hither and thither after their own wanton wills; they give us the outward, and then give the world the inward. O how foolish this, Christian! Thy master gave himself wholly for thee; give thyself unreservedly to him. Keep not back part of the price. Make a full surrender of every motion of thy heart; labor to have but one object, and one aim. And for this purpose give God the keeping of thine heart. Cry out for more of the divine influences of the Holy Spirit, that so when thy soul is preserved and protected by him, it may be directed into one channel, and one only, that thy life may run deep and pure, and clear and peaceful; its only banks being God's will, its only channel the love of Christ and a desire to please him. Thus wrote Spencer in days long gone by: "Indeed, by nature, man's heart is a very divided, broken thing, scattered and parceled out, a piece to this creature, and a piece to that lust. One while this vanity hires him (as Leah did Jacob of Rachel), anon when he hath done some drudgery for that, he lets out himself to another: thus divided is man and his affections. Now the elect, whom God hath decreed to be vessels of honor, consecrated for his holy use and service, he throws into the fire of his word, that being there softened and melted, he may by his transforming Spirit cast them anew, as it were, into a holy oneness; so that he who before was divided from God, and lost among the creatures, and his lusts, that shared him among them, now, his heart is gathered into God from them all; it looks with a single eye on God, and acts for him in all that he doth: if therefore thou wouldest know whether thy heart be sincere, inquire whether it be thus made anew."

5. Now, my last point is rather a strange one perhaps. Once upon a time, when one of our kings came back from a captivity, old historians tell us that there were fountains in Cheapside that did run with wine. So bounteous was the king, and so glad the people, that instead of water, they made wine flow free to everybody. There is a way of making our life so rich, so full, so blessed to our fellow men, that the metaphor may be applicable to us, and men may say, that our life flows with wine when other men's lives flow with water. Ye have known some such men. There was a Howard. John Howard's life was not like our poor common lives; he was so benevolent, his sympathy with the race so self-denying, that the streams of his life were like generous wine. You have known another, an eminent saint, one who lived very near to Jesus: when you talked yourself, you felt your conversation was poor watery stuff; but when he talked to you, there was an unction and a savor about his words, a solidity, and a strength about his utterances, which you could appreciate, though you could not attain unto it. You have sometimes said, "I wish my words were as full, as sweet, as mellow, and as unctuous as the words of such an one! Oh! I wish my actions were just as rich, had as deep a color, and as pure a taste as the acts of so-and-so. All I can do seems but little and empty when compared with his high attainments. Oh, that I could do more! Oh, that I could send streams of pure gold into every house, instead of my poor dross." Well, Christian, this should teach thee to keep thine heart full of rich things. Never, never neglect the Word of God; that will make thy heart rich with precept, rich with understanding; and then thy conversation, when it flows from thy mouth, will be like thine heart, rich, unctuous, and savory. Make thy heart full of rich, generous love, and then the stream that flows from thy hand will be just as rich and generous as thine heart. Above all, get Jesus to live in thine heart, and then out of thy belly shall flow rivers of living water, more rich, more satisfying than the water of the well of Sychar of which Jacob drank. Oh! go, Christians, to the great mine of riches, and cry unto the Holy Spirit to make

thy heart rich unto salvation. So shall thy life and conversation be a boon to thy fellows; and when they see thee, thy face shall be as the angel of God. Thou shalt wash thy feet in butter and thy steps in oil; they that sit in the gate shall rise up when they see thee, and men shall do thee reverence.

But one single sentence, and we have done. Some of your hearts are not worth keeping. The sooner you get rid of them the better. They are hearts of stone. Do you feel to-day that you have a stony heart? Go home, and I pray the Lord hear my desire that thy polluted heart may be removed. Cry unto God and say, "Take away my heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh;" for a stony heart is an impure heart, a divided heart, an unpeaceful heart. It is a heart that is poor and poverty-stricken, a heart that is void of all goodness, and thou canst neither bless thyself nor others, if thy heart be such. O Lord Jesus! wilt thou be pleased this day to renew many hearts? Wilt thou break the rock in pieces, and put flesh instead of stone, and thou shalt have the glory, world without end!

# SERMON XXV.

## HOW TO KEEP THE HEART.

"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus."—PHILLIPIANS, iv. 7.

It is remarkable, that when we find an exhortation given to God's people in one part of the Holy Scripture, we almost invariably find the very thing which they are exhorted to do guaranteed to them, and provided for them, in some other part of the same blessed volume. This morning, my text was, "Keep the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Now, this evening we have the promise upon which we must rest, if we desire to fulfill the precept:—"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus."

This evening we shall use another figure, distinct from the one used in the morning, of *the reservoir*. We shall use the figure of *a fortress*, which is to be kept. And the promise saith that it shall be kept—kept by "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, through Christ Jesus."

Inasmuch as the heart is the most important part of man—for out of it are the issues of life—it would be natural to expect that Satan, when he intended to do mischief to manhood, would be sure to make his strongest and most perpetual attacks upon the heart. What we might have guessed in wisdom, is certainly true in experience; for although Satan will tempt and try us in every way, though every gate of the town of Mansoul may be battered, though, against every part of the walls thereof he will be sure to bring out his great guns, yet the place against which he levels his deadliest malice, and his most furious strength, is the heart. Into the heart, already of itself evil enough, he thrusts the seeds of

every evil thing, and doth his utmost to make it a den of unclean birds, a garden of poisonous trees, a river flowing with destructive water. Hence, again, arises the second necessity that we should be doubly cautious in keeping the heart with all diligence; for if, on the one hand, it be the most important, and, on the other hand, Satan, knowing this, makes his most furious and determined attacks against it, then, with double force the exhortation comes, "Keep thy heart with all diligence." And the promise also becomes doubly sweet, from the very fact of the double danger—the promise which says, "The peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus our Lord."

We shall notice, first of all, *that which keeps the heart and mind.* Secondly, we shall note *how to obtain it*—for we are to understand this promise as connected with certain precepts which come before it. And then, when we have had this, we shall try to show *how it is true that the peace of God does keep the mind free from the attacks of Satan, or delivers it from those attacks when they are made.*

I. First, then, beloved, the preservation which God in this promise confers upon the saints, is "THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH PASSETH ALL UNDERSTANDING," to keep us through Jesus Christ. It is called PEACE; and we are to understand this in a double sense. There is a peace of God which exists between the child of God, and God his Judge, a peace which may be truly said to pass all understanding. Jesus Christ has offered so all-sufficient a satisfaction for all the claims of injured justice, that now God hath no fault to find with his children. "He seeth no sin in Jacob, nor iniquity in Israel;" nor is he angry with them on account of their sins—a peace unbroken, and unspeakable being established by the atonement which Christ hath made on their behalf.

Hence flows a peace experienced in the conscience, which is the second part of this peace of God: for, when the conscience sees that God is satisfied, and is no longer at war with it, then it also becomes satisfied with man; and conscience, which was wont to be a great disturber of the peace of the heart, now gives its verdict of acquittal, and the heart sleeps in the arms

of conscience, and finds a quiet resting-place there. Against the child of God conscience brings no accusation, or if it brings the accusation, it is but a gentle one—a gentle chiding of a loving friend, who hints that we have done amiss; and that we had better change, but doth not afterward thunder in our ears the threat of a penalty. Conscience knows full well that peace is made betwixt the soul and God, and, therefore, it does not hint that there is anything else but joy and peace to be looked forward to by the believer. Do we understand anything of this double peace? Let us pause here, and ask ourselves a question upon this doctrinal part of the matter—Let us make it an experimental question with our own hearts:—"Come, my soul, art thou at peace with God? Hast thou seen thy pardon signed and sealed with the Redeemer's blood? Come, answer this, my heart; hast thou cast thy sins upon the head of Christ, and hast thou seen them all washed away in the crimson streams of blood? Canst thou feel that now there is a lasting peace between thyself and God, so that, come what may, God shall not be angry with thee—shall not condemn thee—shall not consume thee in his wrath, nor crush thee in his hot displeasure? If it be so, then, my heart, thou canst scarcely need to stop and ask the second question—Is my conscience at peace? For, if my heart condemn me not, God is greater than my heart, and doth know all things; if my conscience bears witness with me, that I am a partaker of the precious grace of salvation, then happy am I! I am one of those to whom God hath given the peace which passeth all understanding. Now, why is this called "the peace of God?" We suppose it is because it comes from God—because it was planned by God—because God gave his Son to make the peace—because God gives his Spirit to give the peace in the conscience—because, indeed, it is God himself in the soul, reconciled to man, whose is the peace. And while it is true that this man shall have the peace—even the Man-Christ, yet we know it is because he was the God-Christ that he was our peace. And hence we may clearly perceive how Godhead is mixed up with the peace which we enjoy with our Maker, and with our conscience.

Then, we are told that it is "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." What does he mean by this? He means such a peace, that the understanding can never understand it, can never attain to it. The understanding of mere carnal man can never comprehend this peace. He who tries with a philosophic look to discover the secret of the Christian's peace, finds himself in a maze. "I know not how it is, nor why it is," saith he; "I see these men hunted through the earth; I turn the pages of history, and I find them hunted to their graves. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and tormented; yet, I also see upon the Christian's brow a calm serenity. I can not understand this; I do not know what it is. I know that I myself, even in my merriest moments, am disturbed; that when my enjoyments run the highest, still there are waves of doubt and fear across my mind. Then why is this? How is it that the Christian can attain a rest so calm, so peaceful, and so quiet?" Understanding can never get to that peace which the Christian hath attained. The philosopher may teach us much; he can never give us rules whereby to reach the peace that Christians have in their conscience. Diogenes may tell us to do without everything, and may live in his tub, and then think himself happier than Alexander, and that he enjoys peace; but we look upon the poor creature after all, and though we may be astonished at his courage, yet we are obliged to despise his folly. We do not believe that even when he had dispensed with everything, he possessed a quiet of mind, a total and entire peace, such as the true believer can enjoy. We find the greatest philosophers of old laying down maxims for life, which they thought would certainly promote happiness. We find that they were not always able to practise them themselves, and many of their disciples, when they labored hard to put them in execution, found themselves encumbered with impossible rules to accomplish impossible objects. But the Christian man does with faith what a man can never do himself. While the poor understanding is climbing up the craigs, faith stands on the summit; while the poor understanding is getting into a calm atmosphere, faith flies aloft

and mounts higher than the storm, and then looks down on the valley, and smiles while the tempest blows beneath its feet. Faith goes further than understanding, and the peace which the Christian enjoys is one which the worldling can not comprehend, and can not himself attain. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding."

And this peace is said to "keep the mind through Christ Jesus." Without Christ Jesus this peace would not exist; without Christ Jesus this peace, even where it has existed, can not be maintained. Daily visits from the Saviour, continual lookings by the eye of faith to him who bled upon the cross, continual drawings from his ever-flowing fountain, make this peace broad, and long, and enduring. But take Jesus Christ, the channel of our peace away, and it fades and dies, and droops, and comes to naught. A Christian hath no peace with God except through the atonement of his Lord Jesus Christ.

I have thus gone over what some will call the dry doctrinal part of the subject—"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." I can not show you what that peace is, if you have never felt it; but yet I think I could tell you where to look for it, for I have sometimes seen it. I have seen the Christian man in the depths of poverty, when he lived from hand to mouth, and scarcely knew where he should find the next meal, still with his mind unruffled, calm, and quiet. If he had been as rich as an Indian prince, yet could he not have had less care; if he had been told that his bread should always come to his door, and the stream which ran hard by should never dry—if he had been quite sure that ravens would bring him bread and meat in the morning, and again in the evening, he would not have been one whit more calm. There is his neighbor on the other side of the street not half so poor, but wearied from morning to night, working his fingers to the bone, bringing himself to the grave with anxiety; but this poor good man, after having industriously labored, though he found he had gained little with all his toil, yet hath sanctified his little by prayer, and hath thanked his Father for what

he had; and though he doth not know whether he will have more, still he trusted in God, and declared that his faith should not fail him, though providence should run to a lower ebb than he had ever seen. There is "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." I have seen that peace, too, in the case of those who have lost their friends. There is a widow—her much-loved husband lies in the coffin; she is soon to part with him. Parted with him she has before: but now, of his poor clay-cold corpse—even of that she has to be be reaved. She looks upon it for the last time, and her heart is heavy. For herself and her children, she thinks how they shall be provided for. That broad tree that once sheltered them from the sunbeam has been cut down. Now, she thinks there is a broad heaven above her head, and her Maker is her husband; the fatherless children are left with God for their father, and the widow is trusting in him. With tears in her eyes she still looks up, and she says, "Lord, thou hast given and thou hast taken away, blessed be thy name." Her husband is carried to the tomb; she doth not smile, but though she weeps, there is a calm composure on her brow, and she tells you she would not have it otherwise, even if she could, for Jehovah's will is right. There, again, is "the peace of God that passeth all understanding." Picture another man. There is Martin Luther standing up in the midst of the Diet of Worms; there are the kings and the princes, and there are the bloodhounds of Rome with their tongues thirsting for his blood—there is Martin rising in the morning as comfortable as possible, and he goes to the Diet, and delivers himself of the truth, solemnly declares that the things which he has spoken are the things which he believes, and God helping him, he will stand by them till the last. There is his life in his hands; they have him entirely in their power. The smell of John Huss's corpse has not yet passed away, and he recollects that princes before this have violated their words; but there he stands, calm and quiet; he fears no man, for he has naught to fear; "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ. There is another scene: there is John Bradford in Newgate. He is to

be burned the next morning in Smithfield, and he swings himself on the bedpost in very glee, and delights, for to-morrow is his wedding-day; and he says to another, "Fine shining we shall make to-morrow, when the flame is kindled." And he smiles and laughs, and enjoys the very thought that he is about to wear the blood-red crown of martyrdom. Is Bradford mad? Ah, no; but he has got the peace of God that passeth all understanding. But perhaps the most beautiful, as well as the most common illustration of this sweet peace, is the dying bed of the believer. Oh, brethren, you have seen this sometimes—that calm, quiet serenity; you have said, Lord, let us die with him. It has been so good to be in that solitary chamber where all was quiet and so still, all the world shut out, and heaven shut in, and the poor heart nearing its God, and far away from all its past burdens and griefs—now nearing the portals of eternal bliss. And ye have said, "How is this? Is not death a black and grim thing? Are not the terrors of the grave things which make the strong man tremble?" Oh yes, they are; but, then, this one has the "peace of God which passeth all understanding." However, if you want to know about this, you must be a child of God, and possess it yourselves; and when you have once felt it, when you can stand calm amid the bewildering cry, confident of victory, when you can sing in the midst of the storm, when you can smile when surrounded by adversity, and can trust your God, be your way ne'er so rough, ne'er so stormy; when you can always repose confidence in the wisdom and goodness of Jehovah, then it is you will have "the peace of God which passeth all understanding."

II. Thus we have discussed the first point, what is this peace? Now the second thing was, HOW IS THIS PEACE TO BE OBTAINED? You will note that although this is a promise, it hath precepts preceding, and it is only by the practice of the precepts that we can get the promise. Turn now to the fourth verse, and you will see the first rule and regulation for getting peace. Christian, would you enjoy "the peace of God which passeth all understanding?"

The first thing you have to do is to "rejoice evermore."

The man who never rejoices, but who is always sorrowing, and groaning, and crying, who forgets his God, who forgets the fullness of Jehovah, and is always murmuring concerning the trials of the road and the infirmities of the flesh, that man will lose the prospect of enjoying a peace that passeth all understanding. Cultivate, my friends, a cheerful disposition; endeavor, as much as lieth in you, always to bear a smile about with you; recollect that this is as much a command of God as that one which says, "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart." "Rejoice evermore," is one of God's commands; and it is your duty, as well as your privilege, to try and practice it. Not to rejoice, remember, is a sin. To rejoice is a duty, and such a duty that the richest fruits and the best rewards are appended to it. Rejoice always, and then the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds. Many of us, by giving way to disastrous doubts, spoil our peace. It is as I once remember to have heard a woman say, when I was passing down a lane; a child stood crying at the door, and I heard her calling out, "Ah, you are crying for nothing; I will give you something to cry for." Brethren, it is often so with God's children. They get crying for nothing. They have a miserable disposition, or a turn of mind always making miseries for themselves, and thus they have something to cry for. Their peace is disturbed, some sad trouble comes, God hides his face, and then they lose their peace. But keep on singing, even when the sun does not keep on shining; keep a song for all weathers; get a joy that will stand clouds and storms; and then, when you know how always to rejoice, you shall have this peace.

The next precept is, "Let your moderation be known unto all men." If you would have peace of mind, be moderate. Merchant, you can not push that speculation too far, and then have peace of mind. Young man, you can not be so fast in trying to rise in the world, and yet have the peace of God which passeth all understanding. You must be moderate, and when you have got a moderation in your desires, then you shall have peace. Sir, you with the red check, you must be moderate in your anger. You must not be quite so fast in

flying into a passion with your fellows, and not quite so long in getting cool again; because the angry man can not have peace in his conscience. Be moderate in that; let your vengeance stay itself; for if you give way to wrath, if you are angry, "be ye angry and sin not." Be moderate in this; be moderate in all things which thou undertakest, Christian; moderate in your expectations. Blessed is he who expects little, for he shall have but little disappointment. Remember never to set thy desires very high. He that has aspirations to the moon, will be disappointed if he only reaches half as high; whereas, if he had aspired lower, he would be agreeably disappointed when he found himself mounting higher than he first expected. Keep moderation, whatsoever you do, in all things, but in your desires after God; and so shall you obey the second precept, and get the glimpse of this promise, "The peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ."

The last precept that you have to obey is, "be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication make known your requests unto God." You can not have peace unless you turn your troubles up. You have no place in which to pour your troubles except the ear of God. If you tell them to your friends, you but put your troubles out a moment, and they will return again. If you tell them to God, you put your troubles into the grave; they will never rise again when you have committed them to him. If you roll your burden anywhere else it will roll back again, just like the stone of Sysiphus; but just roll your burden unto God, and you have rolled it into a great deep, out of which it will never by any possibility rise. Cast your troubles where you have cast your sins; you have cast your sins into the depth of the sea, there cast your troubles also. Never keep a trouble half an hour on your own mind before you tell it to God. As soon as the trouble comes, quick, the first thing, tell it to your father. Remember, that the longer you take telling your trouble to God, the more your peace will be impaired. The longer the frost lasts, the more likely the ponds will be frozen. Your frost will last till you go to the sun; and when you go to God—

the sun, then your frost will soon become a thaw, and your troubles will melt away. But do not be long, because the longer you are in waiting, the longer will your trouble be in thawing afterwards. Wait a long time till your troubles gets frozen thick and firm, and it will take many a day of prayer to get your trouble thawed again. Away to the throne as quick as ever you can. Do as the child did, when he ran and told his mother as soon as his little trouble happened to him; run and tell your Father the first moment you are in affliction. Do this in every thing, in every little thing—"in every thing by prayer and supplication make known your wants unto God." Take your husband's head-ache, take your children's sicknesses, take all things, little family troubles as well as great commercial trials—take them all to God; pour them all out at once. And so by an obedient practice of this command in every thing making known your wants unto God, you shall preserve that peace "which shall keep your heart and mind through Jesus Christ."

These, then, are the precepts. May God the Holy Spirit enable us to obey them, and we shall then have the continual peace of God.

III. Now, the third thing, was to show HOW THE PEACE, which I attempted to describe in the first place, KEEPS THE HEART. You will clearly see how this peace will keep the heart full. That man who has continued peace with God, will not have an empty heart. He feels that God has done so much for him that he must love his God. The eternal basis of his peace lays in divine election—the solid pillars of his peace, the incarnation of Christ, his righteousness, his death—the climax of his peace, the heaven hereafter where his joy and his peace shall be consummated; all these are subjects for grateful reflection, and will, when meditated upon, cause more love. Now, where much love is, there is a large heart and a full one. Keep, then, this peace with God, and thou wilt keep thy heart full to the brim. And, remember, that in proportion to the fullness of thine heart will be the fullness of thy life. Be empty-hearted and thy life will be a meager, skeleton existence. Be full-hearted, and thy life will be full,

fleshy, gigantic, strong, a thing that will tell upon the world. Keep, then, thy peace with God firm within thee. Keep thou close to this, that Jesus Christ hath made peace between thee and God. And keep thy conscience still; then shall thy heart be full and thy soul strong to do thy Master's work. Keep thy peace with God. This will keep thy heart pure. Thou wilt say if temptation comes, "What dost thou offer me? Thou offerest me pleasure; lo! I have got it. Thou offerest me gold; lo! I have got it; all things are mine, the gift of God; I have a city that hands have not made, 'a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' I will not barter this for your poor gold." "I will give you honor," saith Satan. "I have honor enough," says the peaceful heart; "God will honor me in the last great day of his account." "I will give thee everything that thou canst desire," saith Satan. "I have everything that I can desire," says the Christian

"I nothing want on earth;
Happy in my Saviour's love,
I am at peace with God."

Avaunt, then, Satan! While I am at peace with God, I am a match for all thy temptations. Thou offerest me silver; I have gold. Thou bringest before me the riches of the earth; I have something more substantial than these. Avaunt, tempter of human kind! Avaunt, thou fiend! Your temptations and blandishments are lost on one who has peace with God. This peace, too, will keep the heart undivided. He who has peace with God will set his whole heart on God. "Oh!" says he, "why should I go to seek anything else on earth, now that I have found my rest in God? As the bird by wandering, so should I be if I went elsewhere. I have found a fountain; why should I go and drink at the broken cistern that will hold no water? I lean on the arm of my beloved; why should I rest on the arm of another? I know that religion is a thing worth my following; why should I leave the pure snows of Lebanon to follow something else? I know and feel that religion is rich when it brings forth to me a hundredfold the fruits of peace; why

should I go and sow elsewhere? I will be like the maiden Ruth, I will stop in the fields of Boaz. Here will I ever stay and never wander."

Again, this peace keeps the heart rich. My hearers will notice that I am passing over the heads of the morning's discourse, and showing how this peace fulfills the requisites that we thought necessary in the morning. Peace with God keeps the heart rich. The man who doubts and is distressed has got a poor heart; it is a heart that has nothing in it. But when a man has peace with God, his heart is rich. If I am at peace with God I am enabled to go where I can get riches. The throne is the place where God gives riches. If I am at peace with him, then I can have access with boldness. Meditation is a great and another field of enrichment. When my heart is at peace with God, then I can enjoy meditation; but if I have not peace with God, then I can not meditate profitably; for "the birds come down on the sacrifice," and I can not drive them away, except my soul is at peace with God. Hearing the word is another way of getting rich. If my mind is disturbed I can not hear the word with profit. If I have to bring my family into the chapel; if I have to bring my business, my ships, or my horses, I can not hear. When I have cows, and dogs, and horses in the pew, I can not hear the Gospel preached. When I have got a whole week's business, and a ledger on my heart, I can not hear then; but when I have peace, peace concerning all things, and rest in my Father's will, then I can hear with pleasure, and every word of the gospel is profitable to me; for my mouth is empty, and I can fill it with the heavenly treasures of his Word. So you see the peace of God is a soul-enriching thing. And because it keeps the heart rich, thus it is it keeps the heart and mind through Jesus Christ our Lord. I need hardly say that the peace of God fulfills the only other requisite which I did not mention, because it was unnecessary to do so. It keeps the heart always peaceable. Of course, peace makes it full of peace—peace like a river, and righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Now, then, brother and sister, it is of the first importance

that you keep your heart aright. You can not keep your heart right but by one way. That one way is by getting, maintaining, and enjoying peace of God to your own conscience. I beseech you then, you that are professors of religion, do not let this night pass over your heads till you have a confident assurance that you are now the possessor of the peace of God. For let me tell you, if you go out to the world next Monday morning without first having peace with God in your own conscience, you will not be able to keep your heart during the week. If this night, ere you rest, you could say that with God as well as all the world you are at peace, you may go out to-morrow, and whatever your business, I am not afraid for you. You are more than a match for all the temptations to false doctrine, to false living, or to false speech that may meet you. For he that has peace with God is armed *cap-à-pié;* he is covered from head to foot in a panoply. The arrow may fly against it, but it can not pierce it, for peace with God is a mail so strong that the broad sword of Satan itself may be broken in twain ere it can pierce the flesh. O! take care that you are at peace with God; for if you are not, you ride forth to to-morrow's fight unarmed, naked; and God help the man that is unarmed when he has to fight with hell and earth. O, be not foolish, but "put on the whole armor of God," and then be confident for you need not fear.

As for the rest of you, you can not have peace with God, because "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." How shall I address you. As I said this morning, I can not exhort you to keep your hearts. My best advice to you is, to get rid of your hearts, and as soon as you can, to get new ones. Your prayer should be, "Lord, take away my stony heart, and give me a heart of flesh." But though I can not address you from this text, I may address you from another. Though your heart is bad, there is another heart that is good; and the goodness of that heart is a ground of exhortation to you. You remember Christ said, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden;" and then his argument would come to this, "for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls." Your heart is proud, and high, and

black, and lustful; but look at Christ's heart, it is meek and lowly. There is your encouragement. Do you feel to-night your sin? Christ is meek; if you come to him he will not spurn you. Do you feel your insignificance and worthlessness? Christ is lowly; he will not despise you. If Christ's heart were like your heart, you would be damned to a certainty. But Christ's heart is not as your heart, nor his ways like your ways. I can see no hope for you when I look into your hearts, but I can see plenty of hope when I look into Christ's heart.

O, think of his blessed heart; and if you go home to-night sad and sorrowful, under a sense of sin, when you go to your chamber, shut to your door—you need not be afraid—and talk to that heart so meek and lowly; and though your words be ungrammatical, and your sentences incoherent, he will hear and answer you from heaven, his dwelling place; and when he hears, he will forgive and accept, for his own name's sake.

# SERMON XXVI.

## HUMAN INABILITY.

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him."—JOHN, vi. 44.

"COMING to Christ" is a very common phrase in Holy Scripture. It is used to express those acts of the soul wherein, leaving at once our self-righteousness and our sins, we fly unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive his righteousness to be our covering, and his blood to be our atonement. Coming to Christ, then, embraces in it repentance, self-negation, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it sums within itself all those things which are the necessary attendants of these great states of heart, such as the belief of the truth, earnestness of prayer to God, the submission of the soul to the precepts of God's gospel, and all those things which accompany the dawn of salvation in the soul. Coming to Christ is just the one essential thing for a sinner's salvation. He that cometh not to Christ, do what he may, or think what he may, is yet in "the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." Coming to Christ is the very first effect of regeneration. No sooner is the soul quickened than it at once discovers its lost estate, is horrified thereat, looks out for a refuge, and believing Christ to be a suitable one, flies to him and reposes in him. Where there is not this coming to Christ, it is certain that there is as yet no quickening; where there is no quickening, the soul is dead in trespasses and sins, and being dead it can not enter into the kingdom of heaven. We have before us now an announcement very startling, some say very obnoxious. Coming to Christ, though described by some people as being the very easiest thing in the world, is in our text declared to be a thing utterly and entirely impossible to any man, unless the Father

shall draw him to Christ. It shall be our business, then, to enlarge upon this declaration. We doubt not that it will always be offensive to carnal nature, but, nevertheless, the offending of human nature is sometimes the first step towards bringing it to bow itself before God. And if this be the effect of a painful process, we can forget the pain and rejoice in the glorious consequences.

I shall endeavor this morning, first of all, to notice *man's inability*, wherein it consists. Secondly, *the Father's drawings*—what these are, and how they are exerted upon the soul. And then I shall conclude by noticing *a sweet consolation* which may be derived from this seemingly barren and terrible text.

I. First, then, MAN'S INABILITY. The text says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him." Wherein does this inability lie?

First, it does not lie in any *physical* defect. If in coming to Christ, moving the body, or walking with the feet should be of any assistance, certainly man has all physical power to come to Christ in that sense. I remember to have heard a very foolish Antinomian declare, that he did not believe any man had the power to walk to the house of God unless the Father drew him. Now the man was plainly foolish, because he must have seen that as long as a man was alive and had legs, it was as easy for him to walk to the house of God as to the house of Satan. If coming to Christ includes the utterance of a prayer, man has no physical defect in that respect, if he be not dumb, he can say a prayer as easily as he can utter blasphemy. It is as easy for a man to sing one of the songs of Zion as to sing a profane and libidinous song. There is no lack of physical power in coming to Christ. All that can be wanted with regard to the bodily strength man most assuredly has, and any part of salvation which consists in that is totally and entirely in the power of man without any assistance from the Spirit of God. Nor, again, does this inability lie in any *mental* lack. I can believe this Bible to be true just as easily as I can believe any other book to be true. So far as believing on Christ is an act of the mind, I am just

as able to believe on Christ as I am to believe on any body else. Let his statement be but true, it is idle to tell me I can not believe it. I can believe the statement that Christ makes as well as I can believe the statement of any other person. There is no deficiency of faculty in the mind: it is as capable of appreciating as a mere mental act the guilt of sin, as it is of appreciating the guilt of assassination. It is just as possible for me to exercise the mental idea of seeking God, as it is to exercise the thought of ambition. I have all the mental strength and power that can possibly be needed, so far as mental power is needed in salvation at all. Nay, there is not any man so ignorant that he can plead a lack of intellect as an excuse for rejecting the gospel. The defect, then, does not lie either in the body, or, what we are bound to call, speaking theologically, the mind. It is not any lack or deficiency there, although it is the vitiation of the mind, the corruption or the ruin of it, which, after all, is the very essence of man's inability.

Permit me to show you wherein this inability of man really does lie. It lies deep *in his nature.* Through the fall, and through our own sin, the nature of man has become so debased, and depraved, and corrupt, that it is impossible for him to come to Christ without the assistance of God the Holy Spirit. Now, in trying to exhibit how the nature of man thus renders him unable to come to Christ, you must allow me just to take this figure. You see a sheep; how willingly it feeds upon the herbage! You never knew a sheep sigh after carrion; it could not live on lion's food. Now bring me a wolf; and you ask me whether a wolf can not eat grass, whether it can not be just as docile and just as domesticated as the sheep. I answer no; because its nature is contrary thereunto. You say, "Well, it has ears and legs; can it not hear the shepherd's voice, and follow him whithersoever he leadeth it?" I answer, certainly, there is no physical cause why it can not do so, but its nature forbids, and therefore I say it *can not* do so. Can it not be tamed? can not its ferocity be removed? Probably it may so far be subdued that it may become apparently tame, but there will always be a marked distinction be-

tween it and the sheep, because there is a distinction in nature Now, the reason why man can not come to Christ, is not because he can not come, so far as his body or his mere power of mind is concerned, but because his nature is so corrupt that he has neither the will nor the power to come to Christ unless drawn by the Spirit. But let me give you a better illustration. You see a mother with a babe in her arms. You put a knife into her hand, and tell her to stab that babe to the heart. She replies, and very truthfully, "I can not." Now, so far as her bodily power is concerned, she can, if she pleases; there is the knife, and there is the child. The child can not resist, and she has quite sufficient strength in her hand immediately to stab it to its heart. But she is quite correct when she says she can not do it. As a mere act of the mind, it is quite possible she might think of such a thing as killing the child, and yet she says she can not think of such a thing; and she does not say falsely, for her nature as a mother forbids her doing a thing from which her soul revolts. Simply because she is that child's parent she feels she can not kill it. It is even so with a sinner. Coming to Christ is so obnoxious to human nature that, although, so far as physical and mental forces are concerned (and these have but a very narrow sphere in salvation) men could come if they would: it is strictly correct to say that they can not and will not unless the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them. Let us enter a little more deeply into the subject, and try to show you wherein this inability of man consists, in its more minute particulars.

1. First, it lies in the *obstinacy of the human will.* "Oh!" saith the Arminian, "men may be saved if they will." We reply, "My dear sir, we all believe that; but it is just the *if they will* that is the difficulty. We assert that no man *will* come to Christ unless he be drawn; nay, *we* do not assert it, but *Christ* himself declares it—'*Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;*' and as long as that '*ye will not come*' stands on record in Holy Scripture, we shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will." It is strange how people, when talking about free-will, talk of

things which they do not at all understand. "Now," says one, "I believe men can be saved if they will." My dear sir, that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the gospel of Christ? We declare, upon Scriptural authority that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, and so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human will will ever be constrained toward Christ. You reply, that men sometimes are willing, without the help of the Holy Spirit. I answer—Did you ever meet with any person who was? Scores and hundreds, nay, thousands of Christians have I conversed with, of different opinions, young and old, but it has never been my lot to meet with one who could affirm that he came to Christ of himself, without being drawn. The universal confession of all true believers is this—"I know that unless Jesus Christ had sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God, I would to this very hour have been wandering far from him, at a distance from him, and loving that distance well." With common consent, all believers affirm the truth, that men will not come to Christ till the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them.

2. Again, not only is the will obstinate, but the *understanding is darkened.* Of that we have abundant Scriptural proof. I am not now making mere assertions, but stating doctrines authoritatively taught in the Holy Scriptures, and known in the conscience of every Christian man—that the understanding of man is so dark, that he can not by any means understand the things of God until his understanding has been opened. Man is by nature blind within. The cross of Christ, so laden with glories, and glittering with attractions, never attracts him, because he is blind and can not see its beauties Talk to him of the wonders of the creation, show to him th many-colored arch that spans the sky, let him behold the glories of a landscape, he is well able to see all these things; but talk to him of the wonders of the covenant of grace, speak to him of the security of the believer in Christ, tell him of

the beauties of the person of the Redeemer, he is quite deaf to all your description; you are as one that playeth a goodly tune, it is true; but he regards not, he is deaf, he has no comprehension. Or, to return to the verse which we so specially marked in our reading, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned;" and inasmuch as he is a natural man, it is not in his power to discern the things of God. "Well," says one, "I think I have arrived at a very tolerable judgment in matters of theology; I think I understand almost every point." True, that you may do in the letter of it; but in the spirit of it, in the true reception thereof into the soul, and in the actual understanding of it, it is impossible for you to have attained, unless you have been drawn by the Spirit. For as long as that Scripture stands true, that carnal men can not receive spiritual things, it must be true that you have not received them, unless you have been renewed and made a spiritual man in Christ Jesus. The will, then, and the understanding, are two great doors, both blocked up against our coming to Christ, and until these are opened by the sweet influences of the Divine Spirit, they must be for ever closed to anything like coming to Christ.

3. Again, *the affections*, which constitute a very great part of man, are depraved. Man, as he is, before he receives the grace of God, loves anything and everything above spiritual things. If ye want proof of this, look around you. There needs no monument to the depravity of the human affections Cast your eyes everywhere—there is not a street, nor a house, nay, nor a heart, which doth not bear upon it sad evidence of this dreadful truth. Why is it that men are not found on the Sabbath Day universally flocking to the house of God? Why are we not more constantly found reading our Bibles? How is it that prayer is a duty almost universally neglected? Why is it that Christ Jesus is so little beloved? Why are even his professed followers so cold in their affections to him? Whence arise these things? Assuredly, dear brethren, we can trace them to no other source than this, the cor

ruption and vitiation of the affections. We love that which we ought to hate, and we hate that which we ought to love. It is but human nature, fallen human nature, that man should ove this present life better than the life to come. It is but the effect of the fall, that man should love sin better than righteousness, and the ways of this world better than the ways of God. And again, we repeat it, until these affections be renewed, and turned into a fresh channel by the gracious drawings of the Father, it is not possible for any man to love the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Yet once more—*conscience*, too, has been overpowered by the fall. I believe there is no more egregious mistake made by the divines, than when they tell people that conscience is the vicegerent of God within the soul, and that it is one of those powers which retains its ancient dignity, and stands erect amidst the fall of its compeers. My brethren, when man fell in the garden, manhood fell entirely; there was not one single pillar in the temple of manhood that stood erect. It is true, conscience was not destroyed. The pillar was not shattered; it fell, and it fell in one piece, and there it lies along, the mightiest remnant of God's once perfect work in man. But that conscience is fallen, I am sure. Look at men. Who among them is the possessor of a "good conscience toward God," but the regenerated man? Do you imagine that if men's consciences always spoke loudly and clearly to them, they would live in the daily commission of acts, which are as opposed to the right as darkness to light? No, beloved; conscience can tell me that I am a sinner, but conscience can not make me *feel* that I am one. Conscience may tell me that such and such a thing is wrong, but how wrong it is conscience itself does not know. Did any man's conscience, unenlightened by the Spirit, ever tell him that his sins deserved damnation? Or if conscience did do that, did it ever lead any man to feel an abhorrence of sin as sin? In fact, did conscience ever bring a man to such a self-renunciation, that he did totally abhor himself and all his works and come to Christ? No, conscience, although it is not dead, is ruined, its power is impaired, it hath not that clearness of eye

and that strength of hand, and that thunder of voice, which it had before the fall; but hath ceased to a great degree, to exert its supremacy in the town of Mansoul. Then, beloved, it becomes necessary for this very reason, because conscience is depraved, that the Holy Spirit should step in, to show us our need of a Saviour, and draw us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Still," says one, "as far as you have hitherto gone, it appears to me that you consider that the reason why men do not come to Christ is that they will not, rather than they can not." True, most true. I believe the greatest reason of man's inability is the obstinacy of his will. That once overcome, I think the great stone is rolled away from the sepulchre, and the hardest part of the battle is already won. But allow me to go a little further. My text does not say, "No man will come," but it says, "No man can come." Now, many interpreters believe that the *can* here, is but a strong expression conveying no more meaning than the word *will*. I feel assured that this is not correct. There is in man, not only unwillingness to be saved, but there is a spiritual powerlessness to come to Christ; and this I will prove to every Christian at any rate. Beloved, I speak to you who have already been quickened by the divine grace, does not your experience teach you that there are times when you have a will to serve God, and yet have not the power? Have you not sometimes been obliged to say that you have wished to believe, but you have had to pray, "Lord, help mine unbelief?" Because, although willing enough to receive God's testimony, your own carnal nature was too strong for you, and you felt you needed supernatural help. Are you able to go into your room at any hour you choose, and to fall upon your knees and say, "Now, it is my will that I should be very earnest in prayer, and that I should draw near unto God?" I ask, do you find your power equal to your will? You could say, even at the bar of God himself, that you are sure you are not mistaken in your willingness; you are willing to be wrapt up in devotion, it is your will that your soul should not wander from a pure contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but you find that you

can not do that, even when you are willing, without the help of the Spirit. Now, if the quickened child of God finds a spiritual inability, how much more the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sin? If even the advanced Christian, after thirty or forty years, finds himself sometimes willing and yet powerless—if such be his experience—does it not seem more than likely that the poor sinner who has not yet believed, should find a need of strength as well as a want of will?

But, again, there is another argument. If the sinner has strength to come to Christ, I should like to know how we are to understand those continual descriptions of the sinner's state which we meet with in God's holy Word? Now, a sinner is said to be dead in trespasses and sins. Will you affirm that death implies nothing more than the absence of a will? Surely a corpse is quite as unable as unwilling. Or again, do not all men see that there is a distinction between *will* and *power:* might not that corpse be sufficiently quickened to get a will and yet be so powerless that it could not lift as much as its hand or foot? Have we never seen cases in which persons have been just sufficiently re-animated to give evidence of life, and have yet been so near death that they could not have performed the slightest action? Is there not a clear difference between the giving of the will and the giving of power? It is quite certain, however, that where the will is given, the power will follow. Make a man willing, and he shall be made powerful; for when God gives the will, he does not tantalize man by giving him to wish for that which he is unable to do; nevertheless he makes such a division between the will and the power, that it shall be seen that both things are quite distinct gifts of the Lord God.

Then I must ask one more question: if all that were needed were to make a man willing, do you not at once degrade the Holy Spirit? Are we not in the habit of giving all the glory of salvation wrought in us to God the Spirit? But now, if all that God the Spirit does for me is to make me willing to do these things for myself, am I not in a great measure a sharer with the Holy Spirit in the glory? and may I not boldly stand

up and say, "It is true the Spirit gave me the will to do it, but still I did it myself, and therein will I glory; for if I did these things myself without assistance from on high, I will not cast my crown at his feet; it is my own crown, I earned it, and I will keep it." Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is evermore in Scripture set forth as the person who worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure, we hold it to be a legitimate inference that he must do something more for us than the mere making of us willing, and that therefore there must be another thing besides want of will in a sinner—there must be absolute and actual want of power.

Now, before I leave this statement, let me address myself to you for a moment. I am often charged with preaching doctrines that may do a great deal of hurt. Well, I shall not deny the charge, for I am not careful to answer in this matter. I have my witnesses here present to prove that the things which I have preached have done a great deal of hurt, but they have not done hurt either to morality or to God's church; the hurt has been on the side of Satan. There are not ones or twos, but many hundreds who this morning rejoice that they have been brought near to God; from having been profane Sabbath-breakers, drunkards, or worldly persons, they have been brought to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ; and if this be any hurt, may God of his infinite mercy send us a thousand times as much. But further, what truth is there in the world which will not hurt a man who chooses to make hurt of it? You who preach general redemption, are very fond of proclaiming the great truth of God's mercy to the last moment. But how dare you preach that? Many people make hurt of it by putting off the day of grace, and thinking that the last hour may do as well as the first. Why, if we never preached anything which man could misuse, and abuse, we must hold our tongues forever. Still says one, "Well, then, if I can not save myself, and can not come to Christ, I must sit still and do nothing." If men do say so, on their own heads shall be their doom. We have very plainly told you that there are many things you can do. To be found continually in the house of God is in your

power; to study the Word of God with diligence is in your power; to renounce your outward sin, to forsake the vices in which you indulge, to make your life honest, sober, and righteous, is in your power. For this you need no help from the Holy Spirit; all this you can do yourself; but to come to Christ truly is not in your power, until you are renewed by the Holy Ghost. But mark you, your want of power is no excuse, seeing that you have no desire to come, and are living in willful rebellion against God. Your want of power lies mainly in the obstinacy of nature. Suppose a liar says that it is not in his power to speak the truth, that he has been a liar so long, that he can not leave it off; is that an excuse for him? Suppose a man who has long indulged in lust should tell you that he finds his lusts have so girt about him like a great iron net that he can not get rid of them, would you take that as an excuse? Truly it is none at all. If a drunkard has become so foully a drunkard, that he finds it impossible to pass a public-house without stepping in, do you therefore excuse him? No, because his inability to reform lies in his nature, which he has no desire to restrain or conquer. The thing that is done, and the thing that causes the thing that is done, being both from the root of sin, are two evils which can not excuse each other. What though the Ethiopian can not change his skin, nor the leopard his spots? It is because you have learned to do evil that you can not now learn to do well; and instead, therefore, of letting you sit down to excuse yourselves, let me put a thunderbolt beneath the seat of your sloth, that you may be startled by it and aroused. Remember, that to sit still is to be damned to all eternity. Oh! that God the Holy Spirit might make use of this truth in a very different manner! Before I have done I trust that I shall be enabled to show you how it is that this truth, which apparently condemns men and shuts them out, is, after all, the great truth, which has been blessed to the conversion of men.

II. Our second point is THE FATHER'S DRAWINGS. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." How then does the Father draw men? Ar

minian divines generally say that God draws men by the preaching of the gospel. Very true; the preaching of the gospel is the instrument of drawing men, but there must be something more than this. Let me ask to whom did Christ address these words? Why, to the people of Capernaum, where he had often preached, where he had uttered mournfully and plaintively the woes of the law and the invitations of the gospel. In that city he had done many mighty works and worked many miracles. In fact, such teaching and such miraculous attestation had he given to them, that he declared that Tyre and Sidon would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes, if they had been blessed with such privileges. Now, if the preaching of Christ himself did not avail to the enabling these men to come to Christ, it can not be possible that all that was intended by the drawing of the Father was simply preaching. No, brethren, you must note again, he does not say no man can come except the *minister* draw him, but except the *Father* draw him. Now there is such a thing as being drawn by the gospel, and drawn by the minister, without being drawn by God. Clearly, it is a divine drawing that is meant, a drawing by the Most High God—the First Person of the most glorious Trinity sending out the Third Person, the Holy Spirit, to induce men to come to Christ. Another person turns round and says with a sneer, "Then do you think that Christ drags men to himself, seeing that they are unwilling!" I remember meeting once with a man who said to me, "Sir, you preach that Christ takes people by the hair of their heads, and drags them to himself." I asked him whether he could refer to the date of the sermon wherein I preached that extraordinary doctrine, for if he could, I should be very much obliged. However, he could not. But said I, while Christ does not drag people to himself by the hair of their heads, I believe that he draws them by the heart quite as powerfully as your caricature would suggest. Mark that in the Father's drawing there is no compulsion whatever; Christ never compelled any man to come to him against his will. If a man be unwilling to be saved, Christ does not save him against his will. How, then, does

the Holy Spirit draw him? Why, by making him willing. It is true he does not use "moral suasion;" he knows a nearer method of reaching the heart. He goes to the secret fountain of the heart, and he knows how, by some mysterious operation, to turn the will in an opposite direction, so that, as Ralph Erskine paradoxically puts it, the man is saved "with full consent against his will;" that is, against his old will he is saved. But he is saved with full consent, for he is made willing in the day of God's power. Do not imagine that any man will go to heaven kicking and struggling all the way against the hand that draws him. Do not conceive that any man will be plunged in the bath of a Saviour's blood while he is striving to run away from the Saviour. Oh, no. It is quite true that first of all man is unwilling to be saved. When the Holy Spirit hath put his influence into the heart, the text is fulfilled—"draw me and I will run after thee." We follow on while he draws us, glad to obey the voice which once we had despised. But the gist of the matter lies in the turning of the will. How that is done no flesh knoweth; it is one of those mysteries that is clearly perceived as a fact, but the cause of which no tongue can tell, and no heart can guess. The apparent way, however, in which the Holy Spirit operates, we can tell. The first thing the Holy Spirit does when he comes into a man's heart is this: he finds him with a very good opinion of himself: and there is nothing which prevents a man coming to Christ like a good opinion of himself. Why, says man, "I don't want to come to Christ. I have as good a righteousness as anybody can desire. I feel I can walk into heaven on my own rights." The Holy Spirit lays bare his heart, lets him see the loathsome cancer that is there eating away his life, uncovers to him all the blackness and defilement of that sink of hell, the human heart, and then the man stands aghast. "I never thought I was like this. Oh! those sins I thought were little, have swelled out to an immense stature. What I thought was a mole-hill, has grown into a mountain; it was but the hyssop on the wall before, but now it has become a cedar of Lebanon. Oh," saith the man within himself, "I will try and reform; I will do good deeds enough.

to wash these black deeds out." Then comes the Holy Spirit and shows him that he can not do this, takes away all his fancied power and strength, so that the man falls down on his knees in agony and cries, "Oh! once I thought I could save myself by my good works, but now I find that

> 'Could my tears forever flow,
> Could my zeal no respite know,
> All for sin could not atone,
> Thou must save and thou alone.'"

Then the heart sinks, and the man is ready to despair. And saith he, "I never can be saved. Nothing can save me." Then comes the Holy Spirit, and shows the sinner the cross of Christ, gives him eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve, and says, "Look to yonder cross, that man died to save sinners; you feel that you are a sinner; he died to save you." And he enables the heart to believe, and to come to Christ. And when it comes to Christ, by this sweet drawing of the Spirit, it finds "a peace with God which passeth all understanding, which keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now, you will plainly perceive that all this may be done without any compulsion. Man is as much drawn willingly, as if he were not drawn at all; and he comes to Christ with full consent, with as full a consent as if no secret influence had ever been exercised in his heart. But that influence must be exercised, or else there never has been and there never will be, any man who either can or will come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. And, now, we gather up our ends, and conclude by trying to make a practical application of the doctrine; and we trust a comfortable one. "Well," says one, "if what this man preaches be true, what is to become of my religion? for do you know I have been a long while trying, and I do not like to hear you say a man can not save himself. I believe he can, and I mean to persevere; but if I am to believe what you say, I must give it all up and begin again." My dear friends, it will be a very happy thing if you do. Do not think that I shall be at all alarmed if you do so. Remember, what you are

doing is building your house upon the sand, and it is but an act of charity if I can shake it a little for you. Let me assure you, in God's name, if your religion has no better foundation than your own strength, it will not stand you at the bar of God. Nothing will last to eternity, but that which came from eternity. Unless the everlasting God has done a good work in your heart, all you may have done must be unravelled at the last day of account. It is all in vain for you to be a church-goer or chapel-goer, a good keeper of the Sabbath, an observer of your prayers; it is all in vain for you to be honest to your neighbors and reputable in your conversation, if you hope to be saved by these things, it is all in vain for you to trust in them. Go on; be as honest as you like, keep the Sabbath perpetually, be as holy as you can. I would not dissuade you from these things. God forbid; grow in them, but oh, do not trust in them, for if you rely upon these things you will find they will fail you when most you need them. And if there be anything else that you have found yourself able to do unassisted by divine grace, the sooner you can get rid of the hope that has been engendered by it the better for you, for it is a foul delusion to rely upon anything that flesh can do. A spiritual heaven must be inhabited by spiritual men, and preparation for it must be wrought by the Spirit of God. "Well," cries another, "I have been sitting under a ministry where I have been told that I could, at my own option, repent and believe, and the consequence is, that I have been putting it off from day to day. I thought I could come one day as well as another; that I had only to say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' and believe, and then I should be saved. Now you have taken all this hope away for me, sir; I feel amazement and horror taking hold upon me." Again, I say, "My dear friend, I am very glad of it. This was the effect which I hoped to produce. I pray that you may feel this a great deal more. When you have no hope of saving yourself, I shall have hope that God has begun to save you. As soon as you say, 'Oh, I can not come to Christ. Lord, draw me, help me,' I shall rejoice over you. He who has got a will, though he has not power, has grace begun in his heart, and

God will not leave him until the work is finished." But, careless sinner, learn that thy salvation now hangs in God's hand. Oh, remember thou art entirely in the hand of God. Thou hast sinned against him, and if he wills to damn thee, damned thou art. Thou canst not resist his will nor thwart his purpose. Thou hast deserved his wrath, and if he chooses to pour the full shower of that wrath upon thy head, thou cans do nothing to avert it. If, on the other hand, he chooses to save thee, he is able to save thee to the very uttermost. But thou liest as much in his hand as the summer's moth beneath thine own finger. He is the God whom thou art grieving every day. Doth it not make thee tremble to think that thy eternal destiny now hangs upon the will of him whom thou hast angered and incensed? Does not this make thy knees knock together, and thy blood curdle? If it does so I rejoice, inasmuch as this may be the first effect of the Spirit's drawing in thy soul. Oh, tremble to think that the God whom thou hast angered, is the God upon whom thy salvation or thy condemnation entirely depends. Tremble and "kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little."

Now, the comfortable reflection is this:—Some of you this morning are conscious that you are coming to Christ. Have you not begun to weep the penitential tear? Did not your closet witness your prayerful preparation for the hearing of the Word of God? And during the service of this morning has not your heart said within you, "Lord, save me, or I perish, for save myself I can not?" And could you not now stand up in your seat, and sing,

> "Oh, sovereign grace, my heart subdue·
> I would be led in triumph, too,
> A willing captive of my Lord,
> To sing the triumph of his Word."

And have I not myself heard you say in your heart—"Jesus Jesus, my whole trust is in thee; I know that no righteousness of my own can save me, but only thou, O Christ—sink or swim, I cast myself on thee?" O, my brother, thou art

drawn by the Father, for thou couldst not have come unless he had drawn thee. Sweet thought! And if he has drawn thee, dost thou know what is the delightful inference? Let me repeat one text, and may that comfort thee: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." Yes, my poor weeping brother, inasmuch as thou art now coming to Christ, God has drawn thee; and inasmuch as he has drawn thee, it is a proof that he has loved thee from before the foundation of the world. Let thy heart leap within thee, thou art one of his. Thy name was written on the Saviour's hands when they were nailed to the accursed tree. Thy name glitters on the breast-plate of the great High Priest to-day; ay, and it was there before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round. Rejoice in the Lord ye that have come to Christ, and shout for joy all ye that have been drawn of the Father. For this is your proof, your solemn testimony, that you from among men have been chosen in eternal election, and that you shall be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto the salvation which is ready to be revealed.

# SERMON XXVII.

## LOVE THY NEIGHBOR.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."—MATTHEW, xix. 19.

OUR Saviour very often preached upon the moral precepts of the law. Many of the sermons of Christ—and what sermons shall compare with them—have not what is now currently called "the gospel" in them at all. Our Saviour did not every time he stood up to preach, declare the doctrine of election, or of atonement, or of effectual calling, or of final perseverance. No, he just as frequently spoke upon the duties of human life, and upon those precious fruits of the Spirit, which are begotten in us by the grace of God. Mark this word that I have just uttered. You may have started at it at first, but upon diligent reading of the four evangelists, you will find I am correct in stating that very much of our Saviour's time was occupied in telling the people what they ought to do towards one another; and many of his sermons are not what our precise critics would in these times call sermons full of unction and savor; for certainly they would be far from savory to the sickly sentimental Christians who do not care about the practical part of religion. Beloved, it is as much the business of God's minister to preach man's duty, as it is to preach Christ's atonement; and unless he doth preach man's duty, he will never be blessed of God to bring man into the proper state to see the beauty of the atonement. Unless he sometimes thunders out the law, and claims for his Master the right of obedience to it, he will never be very likely to produce conviction—certainly, not that conviction which afterwards leads to conversion. This morning, I am aware, my sermon will not be very unctuous and savory to you that are always wanting the same round of doctrines, but of this I have

but little care. This rough world sometimes needs to be rebuked, and if we can get at the ears of the people, it is our business to reprove them; and I think if ever there was a time when this text need to be enlarged upon, it is just now. It is so often forgotten, so seldom remembered, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

I shall notice, first of all, *the command;* secondly, I shall try and bring *some reasons for your obedience to it;* and afterwards, I shall draw *some suggestions from the law itself.*

I. First, then, THE COMMAND. It is the second great commandment. The first is, "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God," and there, the proper standard is, thou shalt love thy God more than thyself. The second commandment is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," and the standard there is a little lower, but still pre-eminently high, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." There is the command. We can split it into three parts. *Whom am I to love?* My neighbor. *What am I to do?* I am to *love* him. *How am I to do it?* I am to love him *as myself.*

First, whom am I to love? I am to love my neighbor. By the word neighbor, we are to understand any person who is near us. It comes from two old words, nae or near, (near) and buer, (to dwell) persons residing, or being near us, and if any one in the world is near us, he is our neighbor. The Samaritan, when he saw the wounded man on the road to Jericho, felt that he was in his neighborhood, and that therefore he was his neighbor, and he was bound to love him. "Love thy neighbor." Perhaps he is in riches, and thou art poor, and thou livest in thy little cot side-by-side with his lordly mansion. Thou seest his estates, thou markest his fine linen, and his sumptuous raiment. God has given him these gifts, and if he has not given them to thee, covet not his wealth, and think no hard thoughts concerning him. There will ever be differences in the circumstances of man, so let it be. Be content with thy own lot, if thou canst not better it, but do not look upon thy neighbor, and wish that he were poor as thyself, and do not aid or abet any who would rid him

of his wealth, to make thee hastily rich. Love him, and then thou canst not envy him. Mayhap, on the other hand, thou art rich, and near thee reside the poor. Do not scorn to call them neighbors. Do not scorn to own that thou art bound to love even them. The world calls them thy inferiors. In what are they inferior? They are thine equals really, though not so in station. "God hath made of one blood all people that dwell on the face of the earth." Thou art by no means better than they. They are men, and what art thou more than that? They may be men in rags, but men in rags are men; and if thou be a man arrayed in scarlet, thou art no more than a man. Take heed that thou love thy neighbor, even though he be in rags, and scorn him not, though sunken in the depths of poverty.

Love thy neighbor, too, *albeit that he be of a different religion.* Thou thinkest thyself to be of that sect which is the nearest to the truth, and thou hast hope that thou and thy compeers who think so well, shall certainly be saved. Thy neighbor thinketh differently. His religion thou sayest is unsound and untrue; love him, for all that. Let not thy differences separate him from thee. Perhaps he may be right, or he may be wrong; *he* shall be the rightest in practice, who loves the most. Possibly he has no religion at all. He disregards thy God; he breaks the Sabbath; he is confessedly an atheist; love him still. Hard words will not convert him, hard deeds will not make him a Christian. Love him straight on; his sin is not against thee, but against thy God. Thy God takes vengeance for sins committed against himself, and leave thou him in God's hands. But if thou canst do him a kind turn, if thou canst find aught whereby thou canst serve him, do it, be it day or night. And if thou makest any distinction, make it thus: Because thou art not of my religion, I will serve thee the more, that thou mayest be converted to the right; whereas thou art a heretic Samaritan, and I an orthodox Jew, thou art still my neighbor, and I will love thee with the hope that thou mayest give up thy temple in Gerizim, and come to bow in the temple of God in Jerusalem. Love thy neighbor, despite differences in religion

Love thy neighbor, *although he oppose thee in trade.* It will be a motto hard to introduce upon the exchange, or in trade; but, nevertheless, it is one I am bound to preach to you that are merchants and tradesmen. A young man has lately started a shop which you are afraid will damage you. You must not hurt him; you must neither think nor say anything to injure him. Your business is to love him, for though he oppose you in your business, he is your neighbor still. There is another one residing near you, who is indebted to you, and if you should take from him all that he owes you, you will ruin him; but if you let him keep your money for a little, he may weather the storm, and succeed in his endeavors. It is your business to love him as yourself. Let him have your money, let him try again, and perhaps you shall have your own, and he shall be helped too. With whomsoever thou hast dealings in thy business, he is thy neighbor. With whomsoever thou tradest, be he greater or less than thou, he is thy neighbor, and the Christian law commands that thou shalt love thy neighbor. It doth not merely say that thou art not to hate him, but it tells thee to love him; and though he should thwart thy projects, though he should prevent thy obtaining wealth, though he should rob thee of thy custom—ay, though he should obscure thy fame, yet thou art bound to love him as thyself. This law makes no exception. Is he near thee, and hast thou any dealings with him? Thus says the law, "Thou shalt love him."

Again, thou art bound to love thy neighbor, *though he offend thee with his sin.* Sometimes our spirits are overwhelmed, and our hearts are grieved, when we see the wickedness of our streets. The common habit with the harlot or the profligate, is to drive them out of society as a curse. It is not right, it is not Christian-like. We are bound to love even sinners, and not to drive them from the land of hope, but seek to reclaim even these. Is a man a rogue, a thief, or a liar? I cannot love his roguery, or I should be a rogue myself. I cannot love his lying, or I should be untrue; but I am bound to love *him* still, and even though I am wronged by him, yet I must not harbor one vindictive feeling, but as I would de-

sire God to forgive me, so I must forgive him. And if he sc sins against the law of the land, that he is to be punished (and rightly so,) I am to love him in the punishment; for I am not to condemn him to imprisonment vindictively, but I am to do it for his good, that he may be led to repent through the punishment; I am to give him such a measure of punishment as shall be adequate, not as an atonement for his crime, but to teach him the evil of it, and induce him to forsake it. But let me condemn him with a tear in my eye, because I love him still. And let me, when he is thrust into prison, take care that all his keepers attend to him with kindness, and although there be a necessity for sternness and severity in prison discipline, let it not go too far, lest it merge into cruelty, and become wanton, instead of useful. I am bound to love him, though he be sunken in vice, and degraded. The law knows of no exception. It claims my love for him. I must love him. I am not bound to take him to my house; I am not bound to treat him as one of my family. There may be some acts of kindness which would be imprudent, seeing that by doing them I might ruin others, and reward vice. I am bound to set my *face* against him, as I am just, but I feel I ought not to set my *heart* against him, for he is my brother-man, and though the devil has besmeared his face, and spits his venom in his mouth, so that when he speaks he speaks in oaths, and when he walks, his feet are swift to shed blood, yet he is a man, and as a man he is my brother, and as a brother I am bound to love him, and if by stooping I can lift him up to something like moral dignity, I am wrong if I do not do it, for I am bound to love him as I love myself. O, I would to God that this great law were fully carried out. Ah, my hearers, you do not love your neighbors, you know you do not. You do not hardly love all the people who go to the same chapel. Certainly, you would not think of loving those who differ from you in opinion—would you? That would be too strange a charity. Why, you hardly love your own brothers and sisters. Some of you to-day are at daggers drawing with them that hung on the same breast. O, how can I expect you to love your enemies if you do not love your

friends? Some of you have come here angered at your parents, and here is a brother who is angry with his sister for a word she said before he left home. O, if you can not love your brothers and sisters you are worse than heathen men and publicans. How can I expect you to obey this high and mighty command, "Love your neighbors?" But whether you obey it or not, it is mine to preach it, and not shift it to a gainsaying generation's taste. First, we are bound to love and honor all men, simply because they are men; and we are to love, next, all those who dwell near us, not for their goodness or serviceableness toward us, but simply because the law demands it, and they are our neighbors. "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

2. But, now, what am I to do to my neighbor? *Love* him —it is a hard word—*love* him. "Well I believe," says one, "I never speak an unkind word of any of my neighbors. I do not know that I ever hurt a person's reputation in my life. I am very careful to do my neighbor no damage. When I start in business I do not let my spirit of competition overthrow my spirit of charity. I try not to hurt anybody." My dear friend, that is right as far as it goes, but it does not go the whole way. It is not enough for you to say, you do not hate your neighbor, you are to love him. When you see him in the street it is not sufficient that you keep out of his way, and do not knock him down. It is not sufficient that you do not molest him by night, nor disturb his quiet. It is not a negative, it is a positive command. It is not *the not doing*, it is the doing. Thou must not injure him it is true, but thou hast not done all when thou hast not done that. Thou oughtest to love him. "Well," says one, "when my neighbors are sick round about; if they be poor, I take a piece from the joint for dinner, and send it to them, that they may have a little food and be refreshed, and if they be exceedingly poor, I lay out my money, and see that they are taken care of." Yes, but thou mayest do this, and not love them. I have seen charity thrown to a poor man as a bone is thrown to a dog, and there was no love in it. I have seen money given to those who needed it with not one half the politeness with

which hay is given to a horse. "There it is, you want it. I suppose I must give it to you, or people will not think me liberal. Take it, I am sorry you came here. Why don't you go to somebody else's house? I am always having paupers hanging on me." O, this is not loving our neighbor, and this is not making him love us. If we had spoken a kind word to him, and refused him, he would have loved us better than when we gave to him in an unkind manner. No, though thou feedest the poor, and visitest the sick, thou hast not obeyed the command, unless thy heart goes with thy hand, and the kindness of thy life bespeaks the kindness of thy soul. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor."

And now some one here may say, "Sir, I can not love my neighbor, you may love your's perhaps, because they may be better than mine, but mine are such an odd set of neighbors, and I try to love them, and for all I do they do but return insult." So much the more room for heroism. Wouldst thou be some feather-bed warrior, instead of bearing the rough fight of love? Sir, he who dares the most—shall win the most; and if rough be thy path of love, tread it boldly, and still on, loving thy neighbors through thick and thin. Heap coals of fire on their heads, and if they be hard to please, seek not to please *them*, but to please *thy Master*, and remember if they spurn thy love, thy Master hath not spurned it, and thy deed is as acceptable to him as, if it had been acceptable to them. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor."

Now, if this love for our neighbor were carried out—love, real love—it would prohibit all *rash anger*. Who is ever angry with himself? I suppose all wise men are now and then, and I suspect we should not be righteous if we were not sometimes angry. A man who is never angry is not worth a button. He can not be a good man, for he will often see things so bad that he must be angry at them. But, remember, thou hast no right to be more angry with thy neighbor than thou art with thyself. Thou art sometimes vexed with thyself, and thou mayest sometimes be vexed with him if he has done wrong. But thine anger toward thyself is very short-lived: thou soon forgivest thine own dear self; well,

thou art bound just as soon to forgive him, and though thou speakest a rough word, if it be too rough, withdraw it, and if it be but rough enough, do not add more to it to make it too much so. State the truth if thou art obliged to do it, as kindly as thou canst. Be no more stern than there is need to be. Deal with others as thou wouldst deal with thyself. Above all, harbor no revenge. Never let the sun set on thine anger—it is impossible to love thy neighbor if thou dost that. Revenge renders obedience to this command entirely out of the question.

Thou art bound to love thy neighbor, then *do not neglect him.* He may be sick, he may live very near thy house, and he does not send for thee to call on him, for he says, "No, I do not like to trouble him." Remember, it is thy business to find him out. The most worthy of all poverty is that which never asks for pity. See where thy neighbors are in need; do not wait to be told of it, but find it out thyself, and give them some help. Do not neglect them; and when thou goest, go not with the haughty pride which charity often assumes, not as some superior being about to bestow a benefaction; but go to thy brother as if thou were about to pay him a debt which nature makes his due, and sit by his side, and talk to him; and if he be one that hath a high spirit, give him not thy charity as a charity, give it to him in some other way, lest thou break his head with the very box of ointment with which thou hadst intended to have anointed him. Be thou very chary how thou speakest to him: break not his spirit. Leave thy charity behind thee, and he shall forget that, but he shall remember well thy kindness toward him in thy speech.

Love to our neighbors puts aside every sin that is akin to covetousness, and envy, and it makes us at all times ready to serve them, ready to be their footstool, if so it must be, that we may be so proved to be the children of Christ.

"Well," says one, "I can not see that I am always to forgive; you know a worm will turn if it is trodden upon." And is a worm to be your exemplar? A worm will turn; but a Christian will not. I think it foul scorn to take a worm for my exemplar, when I have got Christ for my copy. Christ

did not turn—when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when they crucified him, and nailed him to the tree, he cried, "Father, forgive them." Let love, unconquerable love, dwell in thy bosom, love which many waters can not quench, love which the floods can not drown. Love thy neighbors.

3. And now we have done with this command, when we have noticed *how we are to love our neighbor*. It would be a good thing if some ladies loved their neighbors as much as they loved their lap-dogs. It would be a fine thing for many a country squire if he loved his neighbors as much as he loved his pack of hounds. I think it might be a high pitch of virtue, if some of you were to love your neighbors as much as you love some favorite animal in your house. What an inferior grade of virtue, however, that appears to be! And yet it were something far superior to what some of you have attained to. You do not love your neighbor as you love your house, your estate, or your purse. How high then is, "Love thy neighbor as thyself" the gospel standard? How much does a man love himself? None of us too little, some of us too much. Thou mayest love thyself as much as thou pleasest, but take care that thou lovest thy neighbor as much. I am certain thou needest no exhortation to love thyself, thine own case will be seen to, thine own comfort will be a very primary theme of thine anxiety. Thou wilt line thine own nest well with downy feathers, if thou canst. There is no need to exhort thee to love thyself. Thou wilt do that well enough. Well, then, as much as thou lovest thyself love thy neighbor. And mark, by this is meant—thine enemy, the man who opposes thee in trade, and the man of another class. Thou oughtest to love him as thou lovest thyself.

Oh, it would turn the world upside down indeed, if this were practiced. A fine lever this would be for upsetting many things that have now become the custom of the land. In England we have a caste almost as strong as in Hindostan. My lord will not speak to any one who is a little beneath himself in dignity, and he who hath the next degree of dignity thinks the tradesman infinitely below him, and he who is a tradesman thinks a mechanic scarcely worth his notice, and

mechanics according to their grades have their castes and classes too. Oh, for the day when these shall be broken down, when the impulse of the one blood shall be felt, and when as one family each shall love the other, and feel that one class depends upon the other! It were well if each would strive to help and love the other as he ought. My fine lady, in your silks and satins, you have gone to church many a day, and sat side by side with a poor old woman in her red cloak, who is as good a saint as you could be. But do you ever speak to her? Never in your life. You would not speak to her, poor soul, because you happen to be worth more hundreds of pounds a-year than she is shillings. There are you, Sir John, you come to your place, and you expect every one to be eminently respectful to you, as indeed they ought to be, for we are all honorable men, and the same text that says, "Honor the king," says also, "Honor all men." And so we are bound to honor every one of them. But you think that you, above all men, are to be worshipped. You do not condescend to men of mean estate. My dear sir, you would be a greater man by one-half if you were not to appear so great. Oh, I say again, blessed be Christ, blessed be his Father for this commandment, and blessed be the world when the commandment shall be obeyed, and we shall love our neighbors as ourselves!

II. And now shall I have to give REASONS WHY WE SHOULD OBEY THIS COMMAND.

The best reason in all the world is that with which we will begin. We are bound to love our neighbors because *God commands it.* To the Christian there is no argument so potent as God's will. God's will is the believer's law. He doth not ask what shall it profit him, what shall be the good effect of it upon others, but he simply says, doth my Father say it? Oh, Holy Spirit, help me to obey, not because I may see how it shall be always good for me, but simply because thou commandest. It is the Christian's privilege to do God's commandments, "hearkening to the voice of his Word." But some other reasons may prevail more with others of you who are not Christians.

Let me remark, then, that *selfishness itself would bid you love your neighbor.* Oh, strange that selfishness should preach a suicidal sermon; but yet if self could speak, it might, if it were wise, deliver an oration like this, "Self, love thy neighbor, for then thy neighbor will love thee. Self, help thy neighbor, for then thy neighbor will help thee. Make to thyself, O self, friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when thou failest they may receive thee into abiding habitations. Self, thou wantest ease; make thyself easy by treating everbody well. Self, thou wantest pleasure, thou canst get no pleasure if those around thee hate thee. Make them love thee, dear self, and so shalt thou bless thyself." Ay, even if ye are selfish, I would ye were so pre-eminently selfish, and so wisely selfish that ye would love others to make yourselves happy.

The short cut to be happy yourself is to try to make others happy. The world is bad enough, but it is not so bad as not to feel the power of kindness. Treat servants well. There are some of them that you can't mend at all, but treat them well, and as a rule they will treat you well. Treat your masters well. Some of them are gruff and bad enough, but as a class they know good servants, and they will treat you well. There, now, if I would wish to be happy, I would not ask to have the wealth of this world, nor the things that men call comforts; the best comforts that I should desire would be loving ones round about me, and a sense that where I went I scattered happiness, and made men glad. That is the way to be happy, and selfishness itself might say, "Love thy neighbor," for in so doing thou dost love thyself; for there is such a connection between him and thee, that in loving him the stream of thy love returns into thine own heart again.

But I shall not assail you with such a paltry motive as that; it is too poor for a Christian; it should be too base even for a man. Love your neighbor, in the next place, *because that will be the way to do good in the world.* You are philanthropists, some of you subscribe to missionary societies, you subscribe to the society for orphans, and other charitable objects. I am persuaded that these institutions, though they be excel

lent and good things, are in some respects a loss, for now a man gives to a society one-tenth of what he would have given himself, and where an orphan would have been kept by a single family, ten families join together to keep that orphan, and so there is about one-tenth of the charity. I think the man who has the time is bound to give nothing at all to societies, but to give all away himself. Be your own society. If there be a society for the sick, then if you have enough money, be your own sick society. If you have the time go and visit the sick yourself, you will know money is well spent then, and you will spare the expense of a secretary. There is a society for finding soup for the poor. Make your own own soup. Give it yourself; and if every one who gives his half-a-crown to the society would just spend half-a-sovereign to give the soup away himself, there would be more done. Societies are good; God forbid that I should speak against them; do all you can for them: but still I am afraid that they sometimes thwart individual effort, and I know they rob us of a part of the pleasure which we should have in our own benefactions—the pleasure of seeing the gleaming eye, and of hearing the grateful word when we have been our own almoners.

Dear friends, remember that man's good requires that you should be kind to your fellow creatures. The best way for you to make the world better is to be kind yourself. Are you a preacher? Preach in a surly way and in a surly tone to your church; a pretty church you will make of it before long! Are you a Sunday-school teacher? Teach your children with a frown on your face; a fine lot they will learn! Are you a master? Do you hold family prayer? Get in a passion with your servants, and say "Let us pray." A vast amount of devotion you will develop in such a manner as that. Are you a warder of a jail, and have prisoners under you? Abuse them and ill-treat them, and then send the chaplain to them. A fine preparation for the reception of the Word of God! You have poor around you; you wish to see them elevated, you say. You are always grumbling about the poverty of their dwellings, and the meanness of their tastes. Go

and make a great row at them all—a fine way that would be to improve them! Now, just wash your face of that black frown, and buy a little essence of summer somewhere, and put it on your face, and have a smile on your lip, and say, "I love you. I am no cant, but I love you, and as far as I can I will prove my love to you. What can I do for you? Can I help you over a stile? Can I give you any assistance, or speak a kind word to you? Methinks I could see after your little daughter. Can I fetch the doctor to your wife now she is ill?" All these kind things would be making the world a little better. Your jails and gibbets, and all that, never made the world better yet. You may hang men as long as you like; you will never stop murder. Hang us all, we should not be much the better for it. There is no necessity for hanging any; it will never improve the world. Deal gently, deal kindly, deal lovingly, and there is not a wolf in human shape but will be melted by kindness; and there is not a tiger in woman's form but will break down and sue for pardon, if God should bless the love that is brought to bear upon her by her friend. I say again, for the world's good, love your neighbors.

And now, once more, love your neighbor, for *there is a deal of misery in the world that you do not know of.* We have often spoken hard words to poor miserable souls; we did not know their misery, but we should have known it, we should have found it out. Shall I tell you, my friend landlord, you went yesterday to get a warrant against a poor woman that has got three children. Her husband died a long while ago. She was three weeks back in her rent; the last time, to pay you, she sold off her late husband's watch and her own wedding ring; it was all that she had that was dear to her, and she paid you; and you went to her the next week, and she begged a little patience, and you think yourself highly exemplary because you had that little patience. "The woman," you have said, "I dare say is good for nothing, and if not, it is no particular business of mine whether she has got three children, or none; rent is rent, and business is business." Out she goes directly. Oh, if you could have seen that woman's heart when she stood penniless and houseless, and knew not

where to send the children for the night, you would have said, "Never mind, my good woman, stop there; I can not turn a widow out of house and home." You did not do it yourself, did you? No, but you sent your agent to do it and the sin lay on you just as much for all that. You had no right to do it; you had a right in the eye of man's law but God's law says, "Thou shalt love thy neigbor as thy self."

A young man called upon you a little time ago. He said, "Sir, you know my little business. I have been struggling very hard, and you have kindly let me have some things on credit. But through the pressure of the times, I don't know how it is, I seem to get very hard up. I think, sir, if I could weather the next month, I might be able to get on well. I have every prospect of having a trade yet, if I could but have a little more credit, if you could possibly allow it." "Young man," you have said, "I have had a great many bad debts lately. Besides you do not bring me any good security; I can not trust you." The young man bowed, and left you. You did not know how he bowed in spirit as well as in body. That young man had a poor old mother and two sisters in the house, and he had tried to establish a little business that he might earn bread and cheese for them as well as for himself. For the last month they have eaten scarcely anything but bread and butter, and the weakest tea has been their drink, and he has been striving hard; but some one, poorer than he seemed to be, did not pay him the little debt that was due to him, and he could not pay you. And if you had helped him, it might have been all well with him; and now what to do he can not tell. His heart is broken, his soul is swollen within him. That aged mother of his, and those girls, what shall become of them? You did not know his agony, or else you would have helped him. But you ought to have known You never should have dismissed his case until you had known a little more about him. It would not be business-like, would it? No, sir, to be business-like is sometimes to be devil-like. But I would not have you business-like when it is so. Out on your business; be Christian-like. If you be pro

fessors, seek to serve God in obeying his commands—"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

"Nay," says another, "but I am always very kind to the poor." There is a lady here who has got a tolerable share of money to spare, and to her, money is about as common as pins. And she goes to see the poor; and when she gets in, they set her a chair, and she sits down, and begins to talk to them about economy, and gives them a tolerably good lecture on that. The poor souls wonder how they are to economise any more than they do; for they eat nothing but bread, and they can not see that they can get anything much cheaper. Then she begins to exhort them about cleanliness, and makes about fifty impertinent remarks about the children's clothes. "Now," says she, "my good woman, before I leave you I will give you this tract, it is about drunkenness: perhaps you will give it to your husband." If she does he will beat her, you may depend upon it. "Come now," she says, "there is a shilling for you." And now, my lady thinks, "I love my neighbor." Did you shake hands with her? "No, sir." Did you speak lovingly to her? "Of course not. She is an inferior." Then you did not obey this command, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Shall I tell you what happened after you left? That woman as soon as ever you were gone, began to cry. She started off to the minister for consolation. She said to him, "Do you know, sir, I am very thankful to God that I have had a little relief given me this morning, but my spirit was almost broken. Do you know, sir, we used to be in better circumstances. This morning Mrs. So-and-so came and talked to me in such a way, as if I had been a dog, or as if I had been a child, and though she gave me a shilling I did not know what to do. I wanted the shilling bad enough, or else I really think I should have thrown it after her. She did talk in such a way, I could not bear it. Now, if you come to see me, sir, I know you will speak kindly to me, and if you give me nothing you will not abuse me and find fault with me." "Oh," she said, "my heart is broken within me. I can not bear this, for we have seen better days, and we have been used to different treatment to this." Now, you did not love

her. Your shilling, what was the good of that, if you did not put a little love on it. You might have made it as good as a golden sovereign if you had spread a little love upon it. She would have thought far more of it. "Love thy neighbors." Oh! would to God that I could always practice it myself, and would that I could impress it into every one of your hearts. Love thy neighbor as thou lovest thyself.

And now the last argument I shall use is one especially appropriate to the Christian. Christian, your religion *claims your love*—Christ loved you before you loved him. He loved you when there was nothing good in you. He loved you though you insulted him, though you despised him and rebelled against him. He has loved you right on, and never ceased to love you. He has loved you in your backslidings and loved you out of them. He has loved you in your sins, in your wickedness and folly. His loving heart was still eternally the same, and he shed his heart's blood to prove his love for you. He has given you what you want on earth, and provided for you an habitation in heaven. Now Christian, your religion claims from you, that you should love as your Master loved. How can you imitate him, unless you love too? We will leave to the Mahometans, to the Jew, and to the infidel, coldheartedness and unkindness; 'twere more in keeping with their views, but with you unkindness is a strange anomaly. It is a gross contradiction to the spirit of your religion, and if you love not your neighbor, I see not how you can be a true follower of the Lord Jesus.

And now I conclude with just a weighty suggestion or two, and I will not weary you. My text suggests first, *the guilt of us all.* My friends, if this be God's law, who here can plead that he is not guilty? If God's law demands I should love my neighbor, I must stand in my pulpit, and confess my guilt. In thinking of this text yesterday, my eyes ran with tears at the recollection of many a hard thing I had spoken in unwary moments. I thought of many an opportunity of loving my neighbor that I had slighted, and I labored to confess the sin. I am certain there is not one of all this immense audience who

would not do the same, if he felt this law applied by the Spirit in power to his soul.

Oh! are we not guilty? Kindest of spirits, most benevolent of souls, are you not guilty? Will you not confess it? And then that suggests this remark. If no man can be saved by his works, unless he keeps this law perfectly, who can be saved by his works? Have any of you loved your neighbor all your life with all your heart? Then shall you be saved by your own deeds, if you have not broken any other command. But if you have not done it, and can not do it, then hear the sentence of the law. You have sinned, and you shall perish for your sin. Hope not to be saved by the mandate of the law. And oh! how this endears the gospel to me! If I have broken this law, and I have—and if I can not enter heaven with this law broken, precious is the Saviour who can wash me from all my sins in his blood! Precious is he that can forgive my want of charity, and pardon my want of kindness—can forgive my roughness and my rudeness, can put away all my harsh speaking, my bigotry and unkindness, and can through his all-atoning sacrifice give me a seat in heaven, notwithstanding all my sins. You are sinners this morning—you must feel it: my sermon, if blessed of God, must convince you all of guilt. Well, then, as sinners, let me preach to you the gospel. "Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus shall be saved." Though he hath hitherto broken this law God shall forgive him, and put a new heart and a right spirit into his bosom, whereby he shall be enabled to keep the law in future, at least to an eminent degree, and shall, by-and-by, attain to a crown of life in glory everlasting.

Now, I do not know whether I have been personal to any body this morning. I sincerely hope I have. I meant to be. I know there are a great many characters in the world that must have a cap made exactly to fit them, or else they will never wear it, and I have tried as near as I could to do it. If you would not say, "How well that applied to my neighbor," but just for once say, "How well it applied to me," I shall hope that there will be some good follow from this exhorta

tion; and though the Antinomian may turn away, and say, "Ah! it was only a legal sermon," my love to that precious Antinomian. I do not care about his opinion. My Saviour preached like that, and I shall do the same. I believe it is right that Christians should be told what they should do, and that worldlings should know what Christianity will lead us to do; that the highest standard of love, of kindness, and of law, should be uplifted in the world, and kept constantly before the people's eyes.

May God bless you, and be with you, for Jesus' sake!

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